FACETS 7/8

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Ye Olde Editoral

((This could be known as FACETS STRIKES BACK, or, our answer to PEGASUS #5. Either way this turned out to be a beast and it looks as though our next ish will be 9/10. We just have so much great stuff that we have to get caught up (read this to mean the editors didn't do a very good job of page counting and haven't learned to say no yet.) This isn't the beginning of the editorial -- actually it's the end, written on the day before we go to press, but there isn't room at the end. There isn't much here either. Gotta go -- enjoy the zine!))

Editorials are always interesting to write -- and this is goinna be a hell of a long one, so if you're not interested in what we have to say, best skip directly to the LoCs or the stories -- they're the only chance that we, the editors, get to say anything and, sometimes, things need to be said. First, we appologize to all those contributers; writers, artists, and typists who worked hard to get their material to us by the deadline and we really didn't mind extending it a month or so for those of you who were really busy and couldn't get your assignments finished would have enough time to do a proper job. After all this *is* a hobby and not a profession where strict deadlines are all that important. HOwever, we are not amused that by the time I'm writing this (11/8) there are *still* contributers that we haven't heard from. Once we get everything together, it has to be figured out, reduced, then pasted up and that's just the stuff that arrives ready to go. Some of it we are still typing! This takes time. Our printer only has one pressman and he has to do other tings besides FACETS, so there goes more time. We are both in school and it lloks as though we are going to be trying to study for finals and get this beast in motion at the same time--something we prayed we wouldn't have to do. If it's a question of FACETS or school, school MUST come first. We're to get #8 out in time for Media (May '82) and that means a March deadline and we mean that. MARCH. From now on if something doesn't get to us on time and we have not heard a word from the contributer after trying to contact them, then that contribution will be pushed back to the next issue. We hate to do this, but we really no longer have a choice. As it is #9 is going to come hard on the heels of #8 with a JUNE deadline.

Now for the end of a rumor that we were responsible for starting--that #8 would be the last issue of FACETS. Well, things weren't going so well, we were arguing with one of our contributers who is also a friend, work was a problem and we were getting the royal runaround trying to get into the right classes at school. We took a look at FACETS and it dawned on us that what we were doing wasn't any fun any more and we've always said that when it wasn't fun we'd stop, so we did--for two weeks, until the first flood of STARLOG mail started to hit us. As we waded through batch after batch of happy mail it ocurred to us that by quitting we were breaking another cardinal rule of ours--don't take yourself too seriously. We decided that's what we were doing and lightened up. We did make it into the right classes (someday we may even print FACETS ourselves!) and work straightened out a little. So, gluttons for punishment that we are, we're back at it til whenever.

As many of you know we ran an ad in STARLOG expecting to get a few inquiries. Well, we got over 300(!) letters of varing stages of coherency, but only about 150 SASEs. Ah well, win some, lose some. Anyway, about 75 of those ordered copies and we found ourselves reprinting both #5 & 6 and the print run for #7 will go up to 600 copies! We met a couple of new writers and several fantastic artists as well as a lot of nice folks who thought they were alone in the cold, cruel, Harrisonless world. Most of the fans who wrote in had no idea what a fanzine was and a few were, frankly amazed that it cost money. Our favorite letter to date is from a girl who thanked us if it was free, but if it was over $1 forget it! That's what I like, a girl who knows her limits.

As a result of a few editorial hassles and a surge of incoming manuscripts from people unfamiliar with FACETS we've found ourselves in the unpleasant situation of having to draw up guidelines for writers (and artists). We really didn't want to do this, but it's better to have it there in print so that there can be no arguing. SASE us for a copy of da rools, we assure you they aren't too arduous, mostly common sense. We warn you writers out there that we *do* edit. If there is a salvagable story in there we will try to help you find it, if it is unsalvagable (for FACETS use) we will tell you that too. We are not professional editors, nor do we claim to be perfect, hell, we aren't even English majors. We are writers, though, and have been edited by others and profited by it. We *do not* print anything that is shipped to us just because HF is in it. If you submit a manuscript to us expect to have it edited. We will edit only those that enclose an adequately stamped SASE because neither of us has time to sit at the typer and write you an entire letter about what's wrong. If you enclose no SASE of any kind any reply we choose to give depends on how charitable we feel at the moment and how well fixed the FACETS bank account is. Remember, even your golden words may not be worth a 13¢ postcard.

Speaking of SASEs there seems to be some confusion over what one is. SASE is short for Self Addressed Stamped Envelope, unless sending one for the return of a manuscript or art, all that is needed is a business-size #10 (10") envelope with correct postage (20¢). A SASP is a Self Addressed Stamped Postcard and this is ok too if you don't want anything returned besides a little information. When ordering FACETS you pay the postage and *we* provide the envelope, no SASE involved at all. SASEs are a courtesy and should *always* be enclosed when requesting information from us or any of the folks in the Marketplace column. A letter without a SASE may not get a reply. We're going to have to do something sensible about figuring out subscription rates, but until we do you *must* send us a SASE to be notified when the next issue is ready. We *do not* have a mailing list! With this issue we've discontinued 3rd class postage. It gets lost too often and, so far, we've been nice guys and replaced lost issues, but that's getting expensive. You may also order this ish UPS (if your area has it.). To figure UPS rates simply call your local office and ask them how much 1 pound (they don't differentiate ounces under a pound & #6 is 11 oz.) is from Kalamazoo to whereever you are.

For those of you whom we confused totally by mentioning Print Underwood, he was Harrison's character in an episode of GUNSMOKE called "The Sod Busters". He was a sleeze who swaggered around whiskey bottle in hand, intimidating women and children. He got his in one of the better typical western shoot-outs we've seen.

Those of you who know us know that we love animals and we've found that most of you do too. As a service to you folks and those of you who might be persueded to become interested we add the following bit of information to the editorial column.

The RAIDERS stunt special was a delight for many reasons but it cruelly misrepresented the treatment of animals in the film industry. Many producers do care how their animals are treated, but a great many don't this also applies to wranglers (horse handlers) and stuntmen. While Glen Randall was showing us how Rocket was trained to take a fall and Harrison was assuring us that animals were protected in movies, clips were shown from THE WIND AND THE LION, one of the most abusive films of all times. Several horses were so badly injured on the set that they had to be destroyed. Randall, himself, is guilty of wire-tripping a horse in one of the opening scenes in LION OF THE DESERT. There are very few trained fall horses left in Hollywood. Estimates range at less than twenty and, probably, closer to half that many. It is faster and cheaper to buy a horse and wire-trip him than to pay hundreds of dollars a day to use a trained fall horse. The device used is called a "running W". The "points" on the W are hobbles fastened to the horses front legs, the top of the "legs" of the W are fastened to something stationary and when the horse runs out of wire his legs are yanked out from under neath him. This produces a spectacular fall, one from which the horse frequently doesn't get back up. Any time you see a fall in which the horse flips over onto his nose he has been tripped. Fall horses go over onto their shoulder.

I had quite a nice conversation with Carmelita Pope, director of the American Humaine Association, the guys who keep an eye out for animlas on the movie sets. She gave me some startling statistics as well as some welcome news. Right now there is a list of 41 movies (and the list is growing every day!) that are unacceptable for cruelty to animals and that list has been compiled for just the last 5 years!! The Hays Office was responsible for keeping doen the mistreatment of animals before that and they have been out of business for the last 15 years. I shudder to think how long the entire list of unacceptable films is. Some of the films currently listed are; THE LONG RIDERS, HEAVEN'GATE, LION OF THE DESERT, THE MOUNTAIN MEN, APOCOLYPSE NOW, LEDGEND OF THE LONE RANGER, RETURN OF A MAN CALLED HORSE. These are just the ones with wire-tripping of horses as well as drowning a horse, impaling a rabbit, cockfights, animals bled for use on actors, an animal butchered on screen. There are others where a dog is strangled to death, animals are shot, beaten and slit open, killed for use on screen (just to show a carcass), tethered animals are attacked by wolves, and so on *ad nauseum*. Unbelievable,, bit it goes on in spite of the fact that the AHA now has the right, once more, to be on all sets where animals are being used for filming *in this country*. Anything done outside the country is still out of their jurisdiction and will be until they win a new court battle. Meanwhile, they are still battling offenders in the States. Taft International just finished filming a new Grizzley Adams movie called THE CAPTURE OF GRIZZLEY ADAMS for NBC -- they wire-tripped a horse and failed to notify the AHA of their intent to use aminals in their filming. There was no AHA official present and the horse wasn't killed so the AHA can't press charges. The only thing that will help in a case like this is public opinion. If you don't want to see a horse wiretripped on your TV screen, write NBC, 30 Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020 and tell them about it!!

So far all of Harrison's movies are approved by the AHA. The RSPCA was on the RAIDERS set, and the AHA just came off the BLADERUNNER set where they were welcomed by Scott and treated courteously. FRISCO KID was closely watched as Rudy Ugland (the murderous head wrangler of HEAVEN'S GATE) was head wrangler on FK too. Robert Aldritch himself asked that Glen Jones be on the set at all times when he found out who the wrangler was -- Ugland's reputation is that bad. There is no body count for HEAVEN'S GATE, but shots were made and then they just went out and destroyed the horses that could not get up, dragged them away and filmed another scene. Nice.

If you would like a list of the offending films and want to know what you can do to help stop this senseless cruelty, drop a line to : American Humaine Association, 8480 Beverly Blvd, Los Angeles, Cal. 90048, and send a SASE with it. If you'd like to stick in a few bucks to help out, too, that's tax deductible.

Now on to pleasanter topics. I suppose most of you have heard about Harrison's adventure with the snake, but for those of you who haven't, he managed to get bitten by one during a backyard barbecque. We are assuming it was nonpoisonous and didn't do very much damage -- physically, that is. Oh, why does it always have to be snakes??

That's about it for this time out, folks, Enjoy the zine, and we hope we won't have to make you wait so long for the next one. Keep them cards and letters comin'!

I KNOW IT'S A LITTLE LONG, SHOE, BUT I'M REALLY PROUD OF THE WRITING I PUT INTO IT...
EDITOR
SO I HOPE YOU WON'T HAVE TO EDIT IT MUCH...
NAH... JUST A LITTLE CUT HERE OR THERE.
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BRRAPPA!

The MarketPlace

WARPED SPACE: Lori Chapek-Carleton, 5132 Jo-Don Dr. E. Lansing, MI. 48823. Offset, reduced. Current issue #46, $6.80 1st, $6.15 3rd class. General ST/SW/SF/media zine. Winner of the 1980 Fan Quality Award. Some back issues available, SASE for more info. ((Highly recommended.))

HYPERDRIVE - the zine with a very strange dialect -- whould be out pretty soon (if it doesn't get deactivated). Contributions are still being sought for #2. Please send all art contribs to Becky Aulenbach, RR 3, Box 5, Pekin, Ill. 61554. SEnd all written material and SASEs for info to Tammy Gibbs, Box 1001, Crockett, TX, 75835.

Roanne is looking for filksone writers and folks willing to illo same for a filksong book. SASE her at 348 N. Aldgate Ave. La Puente, CA, 91744.

HARRISON FORD FAN CLUB: Joann Emerson, Route #1, Cushing, WI. 54006. ROGUE'S GALLERY, the club newszine, is published 5 times a year. Membership fee is $5 the first year and includes an autographed pic and current ish of zine. Overseas membership $6.50 the first year. ((This club is *not* official.))

FORUM is a clearing house of information concerning all aspects of fanzines. Published every six weeks, it lists complete ordering info for current, out-of-print, proposed and still available zines. Also features fanzine reviews, personal statements and much more. Sample issue is $1.25 USA, $1.50 Canada. SASE for subscription info to KathE Donnelly, 6302 S. Spotswood St., Littleton, CO. 80120. Also send KathE fanzine listings.

FIRST MAGNITUDE: a SW/ST/SF zine is looking for submissions. The zine will be mimeo so gear art accordingly. Also looking for cartoons and jokes as well as photos of SW stars at personal apearances. No deadline established yet. SASE for info to Susan Voll, 507 CArthage Dr., Xenia, Ohio 45385.

DOCKING BAY: a SW zine from Cindi Hartman, 3702 Fairway Pl. Rockford, Ill. 61107. SASE for availability of #1. #2 due out Feb. '82. Contains fiction by Linda Shadle, Rhiemmenth, Karen Miller & Marcia Brin; art by Carol McPherson, Sue Campbell, Lin Stack & Cathye Faraci; poetry by Susan Matthews, Alicia Marie Priore & Irene Shafer, plus a RAIDERS story by Eva Albertsson. $5 and a SASE will reserve a copy. Also seeking SW and RAIDERS material for future issues.

THE PRINCESS TAPES: THE PROLOGUE, a Princess Leia - SW oriented pre-publication zine is now available from Krystarion Press c/o J.A. Low, 2500 Fontaine Rd. Greensboro, NC. 27407. $2.50 1st class. THE PRINCESS TAPES itself will be out by the end of '81 or early '82. Send $5 + SASE for a copy of TPT: THE PROLOGUE and to reserve a copy of TPT, pending final notification of price.

SHOOTING STAR: The first zine dedicated to Mark Hamill is still in the planning stages, but we're sure you Hamillfen out there can help out with good stories and art. Deadline is Media West Con II, May '82. Also, if you have any interest in a fanclub be sure to let Jeanine know.

FAR REALMS: a SW/SF/Fantasy zine. 150 pages, offset, reduced. Fiction by Jeanine Henning, Mark Hernandez and Violet Nordstrom, with art by Woods, Flanagan, Jenni and Otstott. $8.50 1st class. For more info about either of the above contact Jeanine Henning, 1604 Dent, Garland, TX. 75042.

ANTITHESIS: Take passage into the soul of the universe with this SF/Fantasy/Horror zine. Current ish #15 features "Fatal Shadow" by Ann Wilson a novel of loyalty and honor. "Return" to the haunted halls of Camelot. More! $5.50 per issue/$18.50 subscription. 687 E. Market St., Marietta, PA. 17547

KUTA PUTA, Otter Limits Press, P.O. Box 327, Kalamazoo, MI. 49001. Approx. 100 pg. offset, reduced. Due 1/82. Delayed due to financial & printing problems. #2 now accepting submissions. #1 fiction by; Janet Wells, Pat Stanley, Kelly Hill & J.A. Berger. With art by; Martynn, Paulie, Lin Stack, Lybarger, and more.

JELLY BABY CHRONICLES: Devoted to the 4th Dr. Who (Tom Baker). #1 is still available, $6 1st class. The Holiday issue will be available 12/81, $6 1st. #2 tentatively schedualed for 5/82. Otter Limits Pr.

ROSCIUS MAXIMUS: devoted to the career of David Warner. Tentative due date, 1/82, still accepting submissions of poetry & art til 12/81. Contents include a TIME AFTER TIME sequel and a NIGHTWING prequel. SASE Otter Limits Press address above.

THE DAVID WARNER FANDOM NETWORK.$6 1st year. Get 8X10 photo, video tape list, outlets for buying photos, and 4 news letters. Overseas available soon. This club is authorized. SASE to 1359 Portage #4, Kalamazoo, MI. 49001.

THE THOM CHRISTOPHER FAN CLUB: This authorized fan club is for you Hawk fans. SASE for more info, 917 N. Wayne St. #302, Arlington, VA. 22201. If you are an artist or writer currently working with HAWK/BUCK ROGERS material and are interested in being included in our newsletter or year book send xerox copies and return SASE to TCFC/Publications, 900 Leverton Rd. Rockville, MD. 20852

OFFICIAL JARED MARTIN FAN CLUB: Rae M. Curtis, Pres. 220 S.W. 116th, Seattle, WA, 98146. SASE with all inquiries. Jared is actively involved with the fan club and they are seven years old.

JUNDLAND WASTES--a bi-monthly forum on SW-related zines, including articles, reviews, LoCs and zine listings. Current ish #5/6 is a special double ish which includes an article on "The Other" by Anne Elizabeth Zeek, LoCs on the Lucasfilm flap and more; $2 1st class. Regular subscript $3 for 3 issues. Checks to Pat Nussman, 113 Washington St., Williamsburg, VA. 23185.

DOUBLE NATURAL: the M*A*S*H zine. Contents include;"Letters" by Howard Weinstein, a script adapted by Eddie Bernstein. "Happy Endings" by Rich Kolker, "Over the Sea of Japan" by Joel Davis, "A Woman's Place" by Susan Hope Hochman, "April 20, 1918" by Gregory Baker and more with art by Mary Bloemaker, T. J. Burnside, and Pat O'Neill. $4.90 1st class, $4.65 3rd class. Rich Kolker, 45 Beacon St. Bath, Maine, 04530. ((Finestkind!))

WANTED: anything and everything on HF in particular, also Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, Sean Connery and Malcom McDowell. Will buy or trade for photos. Also interested in trading photos for video tapes (VHS)of movies. Write to Leonard May Brecht c/o Bauer, Hof Guildenwerth 72, 5630 Remscheid - 1 West Germany. ((Highly recommended!!!))

REBEL ALLIANCE COOKBOOK, currently in production. Art needed for chapter-heading illos. Recipes to include; Tauntaun chip cookies, Bantha loaf, Scrod Delight and the uses of Kessel Spice.
RECIPES FROM THE JONES FAMILY TRAVELS. Wanted, authentic recipes from the state of Indiana. Write Nevada Jones, c/o T. Shanahan-Saul. To collaborare or request info SASE (US stamps happily accepted) to: 312A-51 Grosvenor St, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1B5 CANADA

ARCHAEOLOGY 101: a RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK zine, 50 pages, typed, reduced, Xerox, $6.25 1st class. Join Dr. Indiana JOnes as his adventures take him from the classroom to exotic locations, from his past to his future. Fiction by D.C. Arian and T.R. De Maiffe with poetry, cartoons and art by; Martynn, Cherie Buchheim, Jane Fancher, Kaifah & Leo. EMPIRE REVIEW; current ish #4. 44-60 pages, typed reduced, $3.00 deposit + SASE for final price notification when ready. Please make A-101 orders out to SOLO VENTURES and ER orders to EMPIRE REVIEW, 3454 Castle Glen Dr. #113, San Diego, CA. 92123.

T'KUTIAN PRESS: has an assortment of goodies to offer; SYNDIZINE II is based on both movie and TV shows. Contains continuations of "Rat Patrol", "Time After Time", "Starsky & Hutch", "Shogun" and more. $11.45 1st class, $10.35 UPS, $4.15 3rd class.
THE OBSC'ZINE features mostly "Star Trek" material of an adult nature. #5 is $7.05 1st, $6.50 UPS, $6.40 3rd.
SNOW ON THE MOON is a one-shot collection of Anji Valenza's Klysadel universe. Illoed by Anji. $11.45 1st. class, $10.35 UPS, $11 3rd class. SASE for more information on these and other projects to: T'Kutian Press, 5132 Jo-Don Dr. E. Lansing, MI. 48823

WANTED: MAN FROM UNCLE magazine published in '66 & '67 (monthly) by Leo Margulies Corp. (digest-sized). Need Mar. 66 - June 66, Sept. to Dec. 66 and ALL '67 except Oct. Any reasonable price paid. Also wanted VHS copies of JOURNEY TO SHILOH, MAN FROM UNCLE, or STARSKY & HUTCH. SASE to Larry Blake, Box 35, S. Vienna, Ohio, 45369.

NIGHTSHADE: an AFTERWORLD Comix from Larry Blake. She's an android built to fight crime, but she's also more. SASE to Larry Blake Box 35, S. Vienna, Ohio, 45369 for more info. ((highly recommended))

Letters of Comment

Martie Benedict, Box 89, Eckert, Colo. 81418

While the impact of FACETS is nice and fresh, I thought I'd make a few comments. I had friends at WindyCon and I'm sure they'd have told me who all was there. (Did you really bid on art with H Ford? I love it) LoCs range from the sublime to the ridiculous to the downright nasty! I take back what I said about everyone being so nice, by the way. But I'll still stand by my first impression of "Festival in Paradise". I thought it was erotic as hell! There's a 'puzzle box' quality to J.A. Berger's stories (the two I've read) reminiscent of a lot of ST scripts -- put our heroes into a weird situation and pull them all out at the break -- but the writing is up and clever and entertaining. Good stories. But nothing, to my mind, in #6 was quite so special as the poem/song (I keep hearing music to it as I read it, wouldn't you know?) "Westron Wynde" and the illo on the facing page. Both devastating insights into Han. Two quibbles only -- I'm not sure I quite understand the chronology of his loss of virginity -- seems either Han's a lot younger than I thought, or he was a late starter. ((Susan writes in about three different universes -- you'd have to ask her on this one. Susan, any comment?))And when I was reading it for a friend on tape ("see what you've been missing, dummy?"), "Thera" kept coming out like "Sarah" with a lisp, which detracted just a bit from the overall impact. Maybe it was supposed to read "Thee-ra"? ((According to the lady creator of the character, Martynn, this is the correct one)) Well, both the poem/song and the illo left me very quiet and happy deep down inside. Wonderful combination. Next favorite was "Intergalactic Colloquey". Han's humor was laid back and wry -- just perfect. Ford came across just right, too -- off-center, a little pedestrian, but with a touch of defensiveness awfully reminiscent of Han ... I laughed all the way through to the end, where I cried. Nice tears, though, funny tears. They took me quite by surprise. That Han is existential has always been very important, and past or parallel makes no difference, so long as the fact is confirmed. A completely perfect piece. Frank particularly liked the illo, too.

The covers were great, by the way, though I liked the front better than the back. I wish I knew the Tommy Lillard character better (gotta get that VCR!) to appreciate your story and soliloquy more fully, Kelly, but needless to say, I enjoyed them both very much. Paulie's illos were special -- the likenesses are nearly perfect and Wanda's

Tommy was very good also -- great rendering! I'm beginning to warm up to Larry Blake's Action Comics style, too -- lots of good motion and the perspective is just great. One of my favorite illos was the oh-so-beautiful and tragic illumination for "Broken Eagle".

OK! I give up -- who's Print Underwood!? The most obscure character I can think of is Jake from GETTING STRAIGHT. He was beautiful -- looked surprised by the whole thing, and no one looks surprised like Harrison. ("Shoot both of them." Huh!?!?)

Got a small question about "Second Time Around" -- to hear Brian Daley tell it, Han and Chewie were pretty much pals from the onset, that is, Han's court-martial or whatever ("... and who's going to believe a Wookiee?"), so I was wondering about Krippo. Chris Jeffords flies in two universes at once, hey? Larry Niven's and George Lucas' -- I like synergism, though, makes for variety. Super story!

I was a little startled at first by the 'boldness' of Dianne Wickes' illustrations, but they really grow on you -- there's a tremendous amount of style and finesse there, and a lack of self-consciousness in the forceful representation that is very compelling.

Mary Jean Holmes, 3140 W. Howard Ave., #10, Milwaukee, Wis. 53221

Since I had the great misfortune of being unable to attend MediaWest*Con , a friend who had been in attendance was nice enough to drop the pile of zines she'd bought there into my bored little lap. Issue 6 of FACETS was among them. As my fifty-nine year old mother is a devout ... uh ... ah ... (how can one say this without compromising the image of her own mother?) afficionado (no? how about rabid groupie, then?) of a certain Captain Solo, I had seen several earlier issues of your publication. Until now, I have never felt any particular urge to comment upon it; however, seeing it in close comparison with so many others (a number of which are highly regarded) prompted me to write.

There is one thing that had generally impressed me about FACETS since I first saw it: the high quality of the artwork. Please do not take this as undiluted praise; as an artist, I'm everybody's worst critic, including my own. There were certain pieces, for instance that, as an editor, I would have chosen not to print. However, in that notorious pile of zines, as in so many I've perused before, I encountered so much artistic drek that I felt compelled to congratulate you for your visually outstanding zine. So what if the likenesses aren't photographic and a few clinkers get through? It's the essence of the character being portrayed that counts, right? I applaud you; your art choices are superb, especially Joni Wagner.

There are two other factors that I consider important to produce a better-than-average zine: the first and foremost is the written contents, be it fiction, fact or review. I don't feel especially qualified to comment upon the stuff you run, other than purely technical critisisms, as I am only an interested by-stander rather than a follower of Master Ford's career (I'm a devotee of the SW universe in general, rather than in specific. Han's a marvelous character, but part of what makes him so is the interaction he shares with the others). I could go into a long critique upon grammer, style, and certain flawed aspects of plot construction, but that would take all the fun out of it, wouldn't it? However, I did notice an inordinately large number of typos, this time around. ((Sigh, par for the course)) But other than that, not too shabby.

The second of those all-important factors I hold so dear is the quality of the print. On this I applaud you most heartily. I remember the first zine I worked on, a Force-forsaken fiasco of wax-stencil mimeos, messy printing, and truly awful writing. Even my own first issue had trouble with the printer; I could scream when I think of all the troubles that beset me. ((Ditto, fellow ed -- our first three ishes were screwed up, which is why we took our business to the printer we use now)) Your repro quality is excellent (say, you wouldn't consider sticking your printer into carbon freeze and shipping him over to Milwaukee, would you? Didn't think so.) ((Nope, but for anyone interested, drop us a postcard and we'll gladly pass on phone and address of Corona Graphics. Take a bow, fellas and gals.)) What else can I say?

Y'know, there is something I can say about the writing, although it doesn't really refer to anything specifically. I read most of #6, at least cursorily and found that Chris Jefford's editorial remarks concerning "The Second Time Around" caused me to dredge up an old ovservation of mine concerning this genure of fiction. I, too write derivative fiction, although not quite as profusely as Ms. Jeffords (by the way, we call it "derivative" rather than "fanfiction" around here to avoid war.) and I discovered some time ago something about this sort of writing that will always influence what I choose to create, derivatively speaking.

I will never, repeat *never*, speculate upon the major future happenings in someone else's universe (i.e., writing a story about the Other). Other writers, I know, revel in just his kind of fortune-telling; I can easily see where this might be an amusing and pleasurable activity to some. I myself have a head full of various and sundry thoughts concerning what might happen in THE REVENGE OF THE JEDI; some, I have editorialized about, both in fan and prozines. But I will never allow these assumptions, however well founded they might be, enter into my writing in any major way.

Why, you may ask? Well, there's really only one reason: I would just hate to sit down and write something long, involved, and dear to my heart (which seems to be the only sort of thing I do), only to see it shot to pieces when a movie book, or some such comes along and contradicts it in a major way. I don't know that we'll ever find out a great deal about Solo's past (wait, I take that back. There are a few suspicions concerning this and its relation to future events slurching about in my slushy brain...); ergo, it would seem, for the most part, to be "safe ground". I can't count the number of Luke-gets-Leia stories I've read, or, for that matter, the endlessstream of Solo-centered MariSues. I wonder, sometimes, how crushed some of thos young authors must have felt after seeing TESB. Granted, things haven't been solved for sure, but until such time as we discover otherwise (and personally, I believe we aren't going to; Leia's too darn stubborn), those takes can only be consicdered as part of an alternate universe.

I know this doesn't bother many fan writers. I'm glad to see that Chris could work her story into a fitting mesh with what we know about Lando. But am I along? Is there anyone else out there who would be disturbed to find out that their carefully constructed plot-line got all shot to hell by one idle comment, or an unexpected twist of plot?

Maybe I'm crazy, but I believe in taking the safer route out. If yo don't believe it can be done, drop by some time and I'll let you read the novels I've completed (or buy a copy of SHADOW - STAR #1 and start following novel one in there, plug, plug!). I think that I can prove my point more eloquently and give you an entertaining time to boot.

Susan Prather, 39 Morningstar Drive, San Francisco, Cal. 94132

It's almost too much for my blood pressure (not to mention my glands) to have FACETS 6, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, and TESB all out at the same time. The horrible thought which keeps occuring to me is that when those two films leave the market it'll be a long dry spell until BLADE RUNNER. (Note: to say that Mr. Ford is "handsome" with his Deckard buzz cut is to understate the case something awful. I saw a candid of him recently, and he is BEAUTIFUL! Be still my heart! It really isn't fair.) ((To each her own, Susan!)) At any rate, thank God there's FACETS to keep the hopelessly addicted from going completely berserko. #6 was topnotch, as always though I think I've read issues which were overall more consistent. For instance, disliked J.A. Berger's "Bad Case of Corellian" because (a) the idea got derailed somewhere along the line -- it could've been a lot better and (b) I HATED THE CHARACTERIZATIONS!! If you could call them that. Han came off a lot better in Berger's last story; in this one he was just a loon. I love his wild man craziness as much as anyone, but he was SO weird in this one it was ludicrous. Besides, even granted the fact that he is one immature dude, his childishness here was so stupid (like the way he crabbed at Leia and beat up on the Davalians that I barely recognized him. As for Leia, if this is how people see her, then no wonder she's the least popular character of the series. I like to give her credit for brains, first of all, which were conspicuously lacking in this story. Grrrr. Suffice it to say that as a Leia fan I was deeply disappointed, not to mention offended. May the Princess Organa zap the author a good one. Speaking of zapping authors, I would like to ask Eva Albertsson to step outside concerning "Intergalactic Colloquy". Everything was okay -- I liked the idea very much, as a matter of fact. (I have images of Harrison opening the medicine cabinet in the morning and coming face to face with Captain Solo -- "Uh, hi...") UNTIL I hit the bit about Leia. "Cute kid -- but no", eh? Growl. Afraid I disagree very strongly with that! Still, I realize that the jury is still out on that relationship as far as many fans are concerned. Guess we'll just have to *sob* wait until 1983 to find out ... if we last that long -- I may suffer terminal withdrawl. Anyway. "Occupational Hazard" was cute, but it didn't really go anywhere. Did like the strength of Pam's accompanying illo, though, and cartoon immediately following was painful ("Frog Lips"? Oh dear). Oh, and I LOVED "Revenge of the Jedi" (pg. 81) Now THERE'S a thought which probably hadn't crossed the lecherous female fan's mind yet. What a bust-up. Overall, the rest of the fiction was pretty good, though I thought the ending on "An Honest Job" was kind of weak. Still am very fond of Sherry Magee's series on Kenny -- she's really got him down in a nutshell. Whew! A great story. Also liked Kelly's Tommy.

But anyway, the zine's still great, though I think it's becoming a little Solo heavy. ((We can only print what we get, kid.)) I wish someone would do a story on Martin Stett -- any takers? Who was Print Underwood, anyhoo? Still I suppose RAIDERS will stem that tide. I still haven't gotten over the media blitz -- I'm afraid I still have a tendency to run around yelling crazily, "He's a star! He's a star!" Really warms the cockels of your heart, doesn't it? I'm so proud of him! (Tee hee)

Keep up the good work.

Roberta Rogow, P.O. Box 124, Fair Lawn, NJ 07410

I've just flipped through numbers 3,5 and 6 of FACETS -- I haven't got time or energy in this heat to do a full LoC, but I did want to add my own voice to the chorus of praise and make a few general comments.

The Ken Boyd stories are incredibly poignant -- especially now, when aid to vets is being cut back and the Lost Generation of Vietnam is being deprived of much-needed help. For every guy that made it back more or less intact there is a Ken wandering around out there -- Vietnam is being forgotten -- UNFORTUNATELY! Americans act as if it didn't happen.

Tommy Lillard stories tend to play up the differences, but I'd like to see more Jewishness (Yiddishkeil?) in them (I know, if I want it, I gotta write it!) ((And she did, too folks -- be looking in #8 or #9 for it!)). I know this is Tommy's zine, but I don't get much Avram in the stories -- is anyone out there Jewish? Not to mention a few people who might drop in -- Levi Strauss, with his cnavas pants, for example? How about it, folks? ((Challenges, challenges -- show of hands -- or rather manuscripts -- please?))

Bob Falfa in one story in #5 is about par for the course -- he kinda got lost in the shuffle in AMERICAN GRAFFITI, and I missed MORE A.G.

Han Solo -- what can I say? Most of the stories are *good* -- no 'character rape', making him say or do things that would make either Lucas or Ford cringe. "Bad Case of Corellian" (FACETS 6) is terrific -- I *loved* the ending! "Festival in Paradise" (#5) is good, too. The rest are OK -- well-crafted, nice characterizations.

Art is excellent! How do you get all those artists? Poetry? Ok, I guess -- I have a tin ear for most poetry -- the filks are singable.

Generally speaking, FACETS is good, and getting better. SASE enclosed for #7.

Ronni Sacksteder ((if anyone knows Ronni's new address, let us know. We lost it ...))

I finally read through all four of the zines I bought at Media, including FACETS 6. There is much to like in this ish and I'm getting more willing these days to give zines the kind of feedback I feel zine eds sometimes starve for.

Of course Martynn's art is wonderful, funny and perfectly drawn. Does she ever goof? I think not. (However, it suffered in reduction, losing detail).

Yea, Gortfield! Keep up the funny work!

Four stars for "Home is the Hunter". I nominate it 'best of zine', and not just because Beth tried to write it. Kelly, you have shown the warmth and feeling of Tommy's character that was almost edited out of the film. He cares deeply, without letting the cream filling leak out. Paulie's art for this story is among the best I've seen her do, especially the Tommy 'n' Avram -- good good work. Second best -- meaning no denigration at all, comes "Changes" by Sherry Magee (this is the second piece of her writing in FACETS I've enjoyed a lot -- hope she's not in shock. This is a deeply thought-out and sensitive charac-

ter study of Ken Boyd, a young/old man who just can get his shattered life back together again. It's heartening to see an author who sees some hope for him in people who care whether or not he sits in that trailer for the next twenty-five years. Not only is Sandy a real lady with her own problems, but she's Ken's cousin and, I suppose, very unlikely to be lusting after him "Mary Sue" style. Thanks Sherry, for this breath of fresh air in fanfic heroines!

I am bothered, as an author and zine fen, by some of the artwork chosen for this issue. I don't draw so I'm reluctant to critique those who do; however, if "Changes" were my story, I'd be quite disappointed with the illos for it and those for Sheila Paulson's fine poem "Hero". The actors represented in each case are not recognizable to me and I'm sorry if that hurts the artist involved, but they need work, in my former-editor perspective. ((Editorial comment here -- in the case of the story, Sherry chose Dianne as artist, and we liked what she came up with. It has a rough woodcut style with a great deal of finesse and detail worked into it. Our perspective -- 'nuff said?))

I have no such complaint about Larry Blake's artwork for "An Honest Job", and the premise and action of Elyse's story are very good, giving a different look at the holier-than-thou rebels fan fic is full of. I am confused on one point -- how do Han and Frass/Fracus know each other? I was looking for a recognition scene but couldn't find one. Nevertheless, a well done story.

Chris Cohea's poem "He Who Flies the Falcon" is finely done, too, a poem to the beautiful Corellian and the freedom that may be his most beautiful feature. Daphne's illo is stark and fitting -- almost a one dimensional sculpture.

As for Eva's "Intergalactic Colloquy" I'm not sure *how* to classify it, but it's wonderful! Very funny insight and pure SF in the *speculative fiction* translation of that term.

"Thoughts" is very fine, once more deeply true to character - I think Tommy sits at your shoulder, sometimes, Kelly; wish he'd sit, stand, or lay at mine! Wanda L's illo a nice takeoff on the famous sculpture Tommy Lillard would never have seen.

Lastly, I *have* to protest J. A. Berger's "Bad Case of Corellian ". It's a clever idea for a story, ruined from my viewpoint, by it's miserable portrayal of Leia. Please, dear SW authors, *please*, we are (blind estimate) 80 - 90% women, WHY do we keep writing women in our fiction as helplessly, disastrously foolish or stupid or otherwise incapable of dealing with their world? WHY? We don't really HATE women, do we? We don't really HATE Leia for TESB's plot twists showing her confusion?

I digress somewhat, because this angers me so. Women should support and care about women, (take that however you please.) yet here is another woman writer portraying the ONLY clout-weilding woman we've seen in SW or TESB (the films) Leia Organa, who surely must be acaemically educated above the level of the masses, she would have, in some sense, ruled: Leia in *this* story is too ignorant of her galaxy *or* her reality to keep herself and or Han out of trouble! If it weren't for the Corellian she'd still be sitting there while the local Imperials showed up to invite her to another prison cell! There is *no* reason to play up Han's ingenuity by making Leia the convenient DUMB BROAD, so foolish that she *deserves* the machotrip spanking she gets from him. Please, let her be a whole, real person, just as you allow Han, Luke, Lando, Ben, Chewie and even Lord Vader to be in your stories.

Sorry about my soapboxing, but this story is not the first to put down Leia in order to build up Han or someone (usually male) else. I wish I *could* see this as just a funny story, but I can't. I applaud Wanda's illos - her SWs art gets better and better.

Almost forgot to say I loved Martynn's illo for Susan Mattew's "Westron Wynde". It's absolutely lovely!!

Marcia Wickes, 806 Harrison St. Thibodaux, LA. 70301.

The discovery of your zine posed a serious problem for me. How does a chronic speed-reader and confirmed H.F. admireer make the pleasure of a quarterly zine last beyond a few hours?

It isn't easy.

With FACETS 6, I have perfected my technique and would like to share it with others who have a similar problem.

The key to my method is *self discipline*. No cheating, no self-indulgence, no matter how great the temptation. Remember, you are only hurting yourself if you don't follow the rules. (That's the schoolteacher in me coming out, sorry!)

Day 1 - Look at the illustrations. Compare, contrast, study. Try to formulate an idea of what the stories are about by looking at the pictures. Note various methods of illustration. Wish enviously that you could do as well.

Day 2 - Read the title and contents page and Ye Olde Editorial. Look for familiar names, note unfamiliar ones.

Day 3 - Read the Marketplace and respond to anything interesting.

Day 4 - Read the Letters of Comment. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each and why.

Day 5 - Read the poetry. formulate an opinion based on content, style, skill and precision of rhythum and rhyming patterns.

Day 6 - Reread favorite poems.

Day 7 and following days - Read one story a day. After that reread one story a day. Judge according to plot, characterization, style, etc.

Last day - Reread entire zine from over to cover. List all selections in order of enjoyment, from most liked to least. Analyze reasons for your decisions. Hide the zine for a couple of weeks, and read it again.

FACETS 6 is excellent. It's nice to read a zine that does not look like its contributers are amateurs. Keep up the good work.

My favorite pieces were "Changes" by Sherry Magee and "Westron Wynde" by susan Matthews. I have yet to read anything by these two talented writers that I have not enjoyed. I also loved "Honest Job" by Elyse Dickenson.

I enjoyed all the other stories in this issue as well, although I found the spanking scene in "A Bad Case of Corellian" a little hard to take. I cannot picture Han Solo ever hitting a woman, particularly the Princess, hard enough to hurt her. And Princess Leia, raised all her life to be a diplomat, would hardly resort to kicking someone in the shins, no matter what the provocation.

I found some of the poetry in this issue a little weak structurally, but I am a perfectionist when it comes to poetry. The thoughts in each were true. I liked Dianne Wickes' best, but I must admit to being prejudiced. I've admired (and envied) my sister's talent for years and it's nice to see her perfecting her craft. I also loved both front and back covers. The time and effort put into all the illos of this issue are obvious.

The cartoons this time are great! I'll go to a toga party with Indy any day! And Luke siccing a unicorn on Han is a great idea.

Overall, this issue gets a high rating in my thoughts. I hope to see many more FACETS with a similar degree of quality. I'm aware of the time and effort that goes into putting together a pub-

lication like this, but I hope you will continue. You must get a lot of satisfaction in seeing such excellent results. ((You'd better believe we do. Sometimes it's the only thing that keeps us going.))

Jane Tillman, 513 Ave. G, Apt. E, Redondo Beach, CA. 90277.

After receiving my first FACETS (#6), I felt I truly had to let you know how I felt about it - esp. after checking out your already lengthy LoC section. I was really in the dark as to just *what* I was getting myself into, even after reading your flyer on available issues. It really is just what the flyer said, yet before actually seeing it, I couldn't really believe that was what it *was* going to be.

I've had some experience over the past few years with fanzines (such an awkward name) and found they can vary greatly according to the creators. I've also had no little experience in the field of fandom in general, tho my involvment up til now was purely of a musical sort - and still is outside of Harrison I just don't have a thing for actors. However, HF is *somehow* different.

Anyway, FACETS is really fascinating. After all it covers such a really typical reaction - a fan's mental continuation of the storyline concerning their favorite actors - yet I've never seen it put to paper and used so well before.

As you apparently have regular contributors may I comment on the story quality? This appears to fluctuate greatly (as does the art, but that's certainly more understandable). I liked "Home is the Hunter" best. I only went to see FK for Harrison and wound up *entranced* -what a sweet, adorable film! This story fit well with the film's characterizations and didn't make more or less of Tommy than he was potrayed. Nice illustrations too.

But things are very confused from then on! My favorite HF character is, along with the majority, Han Solo, but I can't quite tell *where* your writers seem to be getting *their* personalities for him from! Perhaps I am hard to please because I find HF's portrayals as complete as possible with little room for improvement and certainly Han shouldn't come across as *less* than this. Especially true in "A Bad Case of Corellian" - the title alone left me uneasy and *where* did *this* guy in the story come from? *Spanking* Princess Leia? Oh yeah, sure. As if she wouldn't have left him with a few less teeth for a stunt like that. But that's the most extreme and unpleasant case. Otherwise, Han's "lapses" in these stories are more understandable, even if they *aren't* the Han Solo I got! Sure, he was reckless, arrogant, complaining and pretty thoughtless at time - but if he were as bad as these stories made him out to be, why would he ever come to the aid of the rebellion? ((Money!)) I sincerely doubt *these* Hans' would have lasted any longer with Luke and Ben than humanly possible. Deep down there, there had to be *some* good, some spark of decency. That's what Han *is* - all this gruff exterior and all along you're waiting to see that better part peep out, cause you *know* it's there. After all, you didn't need to wonder with Luke! Even so, I *did* enjoy "The Second Time Around". All I'm saying is c'mon, lets keep Han from being such a worthless violent, whining personality, otherwise who'd even care? Or maybe it's that Harrison touch that nobody will ever be able to capture on paper?

I had more luck with the art and poetry, particularly Martynn's stuff - how I'd love some prints, they're gorgeous! Larry Blake's stuff really helps along "An Honest Job" and art *and* written word for "Intergalactic Colloquy" are great! "Broken Eagle" is a *really* lovely little bit and I was really cracking up over "Tommytoons", *cute!* The only part I skipped was "Changes", as I didn't see HEROES and I doubt I'd be able to enjoy it (not knowing the original character) ((Aw, give it a try, you might be surprised.))

Isn't anyone going to take a stab at *their* version of REVENGE OF THE JEDI?

I will be looking forward to future issues of your (overall) finely done magazine.

Joyce Quan, 1012 NW 70th, Seattle, WA. 98117.

I enjoyed FACETS #6 quite a bit, although I feel it isn't nearly as good as #'s 3-5. I think those are your best so far. The stories were fine, but I didn't feel the artwork was up to par with your usual. Of course, I really admire the works of Paulie and Martynn a lot. By far, the best piece in the whole zine is "Westron Wynde". I thought that piece was very touching and the matching drawing was just spectacular! Nice insight into my favorite hero! The other great story was the Tommy story. Nice touch, the way Tommy solved the problem of what to do with Matt Diggs. The Tommytoon was cute too. Whatever happened to "Aesthetic White Space? I liked it. ((No room.))

Although this was your biggest issue yet, I just didn't feel the quality was up to par. The poems, withthe exception of "Westron Wynde" and "He Who Flies the Falcon" (which I also liked a lot) seemed shallow, simple. Too simple for the Han we've all come to know. We all know there's more to Han "than meets the eyes" and yet the rest of the poems seem to just touch the surface. That's not to say the writers didn't try. I, for one, am absolutely no good at writing poetry. Still, that doesn't change how I feel about the poems themselves.

Miss Piggy, Muppet Studios, London, England.

I have taken it upon *moi* to call your attention to the ethnic slur on page 23 of your fanzine, FACETS. I do not know this Harrison Ford personally but I understand from a close associate of *moi*, Mr. Frank Oz, who has had occasion to deal with Mr. Ford's perennial employer, Mr. Lucas, that both Mr. Ford and Mr. Lucas are reasonable humans who would never dream of alienating a large portion of their audience by making unkind references to certain sapient fans of theirs. Frogs do not have lips but their tongues more than make up for the deficiency!

P.S. Can't understand what Han Solo sees in that silly little Princess Leia. She is short, pushy, and not nearly as beautiful and captivating as *moi*.

P.P.S Ford isn't bad.

((Ye Old Editors hereby make a public apology to Miss. Piggy's associate and all sapient members of the family *Ranidæ*.))

Eva Albertsson, P. 410, S-97013, Hakkasbyn, Sweden.

I read Susan's "Westron Wynde" which is promising to be the best thing in an overall good zine - so incredibly sweet; I love the idea of a softly maturing Han, and it's probably quite true that "most snugglin' ladies don't know how to surrender". Martynn's illo - which I also got a copy of from the illustrious artist herself - really brings out all the sweetness in his character, which we all know to be there, whenever life offers him a quiet enough moment to let it show. I also read a singularly good Tommy story - by you, Kelly, wasn't it? - which I liked above all because of its message. I was a little disturbed by the film, where Avram is brought to kill, despite his conviction - of course it was absolutely necessary, but it *could* be misconstrued as "the manly thing to do" or something had it not been for this continued adherence to his beliefs later. So I really appreciated the idea of Tommy

learning how to AVOID killing even in a situation like this.

And, of course, Jean Ann Berger went and did it again! Of all the hilarious masterpieces I've read "A Bad Case" is definately one of the funniest! We need more by this excellent author, don't lose her; she has all the sensitivity and humor as well as the profound understanding of the Corellian's character which marks the truly incurable Hanatic! Tell Chris Callahan not to be so picky; why can't his glance take in silence? A touch of synaesthesia only adds to the poetry.

In this contact I'd like to say something on the treatment of Leia in fanfic; she *is* a difficult character to grasp and blow any life into - as far as I know the only one who had managed that so far is Susan Matthews - since, in Carrie Fisher's representation and George Lucas' imagination, she *is* flat, I'm sorry, but she is. I wish she were not since I enjoy reading stories where she comes more alive, the concept of this character is basically good, and Carrie emerges in her interviews the most charming and lovable creature imaginable - but Leia is till flat, and my view is that we should rather compliment the few who can make anything of her than fault anyone for doing a mediocre job for a mediocre character.

Karin Zygowicz, 18535 Glen Oak, Lansing, IL. 60438.

The best thing about FACETS 6 is J. A. Berger's "A Bad Case of Corellian". She did a fantastic job of capturing Han and her repartee between Han and Leia is exceptional. I laughed my way through the whole story. I was also pleased to see Leia finally got the spanking she so richly deserves.

Chris Jeffords' "The Second Time Around" was great. I liked the idea of Han having to win the *Falcon* a second time and the enthusiasm with which he planned the alterations he would make. She even made me like Lando Calrissian. No mean feat, since I took an immeadiate intense dislike to the man in TESB. I also liked Krippo and would like to know what happened to him. Did he have a falling out with Han or did he get killed? I like Chris' style and would love to read her version of how Han and Chewie got together.

The basic premise of Eva Oslo's "Occupational Hazard" was good but something seemed to be missing. The story was over before it had a chance to develop. The ending seemed chopped to me and I found myself looking for more.

I loved Kelly's "Home is the Hunter". I developed an affinity for Tommy Lillard from reading the book and that affinity was only deepened by my finally getting to see Harrison's characterization last December. I was glad to see that Tommy still treasures his friendship with Avram and hasn't started taking things for granted. I also loved the carpentry connection between Tommy and Harrison. Paulie's illustrations were perfect, especially the title page.

At first I didn't care for Elyse Dickenson's "An Honest Job" but after a second reading I had to reevaluate my opinion. I still found it to be overlong. But then, I should probably be the last person to criticize anyone in that area, having the same tendency to run on myself. Our interpretations of Han didn't always jive and that made reading a little ragged at times. Still, it had its moments. The best being Luke's reaction to the *Falcon*, Han tearing up the contract and then later on raging back and forth demanding retribution.

Chris Cohea's "He Who Flies the Falcon" is the best Han Solo poem I've read in a long time. As a matter of fact, it she best poem of any kind I've read in a long time. Her phrasing is magnificent and conveyed beautifully many of my feelings about Han that never quite coalesced into any of my own poetry. My other favorites were "Intergalactic Colloquy" and "Westron Wynde".

Even if everything else had been terrible, #6 would have been worth the money just for Martynn's illo on page 88. Wow! I could stare into those eyes forever. I also liked "Revenge of the Jedi?" especially the Princess collapsed on the floor laughing uncontrollably. I almost ended up there myself.

All in all FACETS 6 was great. Each issue just seems to get bigger and better. One thing I would like to see though, is a Halloran story. I like the character but don't feel enough at ease with him to try a story of my own. Hopefully, there's someone out there who's more familiar with the character that will give it a try.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK is out and I love it. George Lucas has done it again, this time with a little help from Stephen Spielberg. And Harrison has given us another superb character to work with. I'm really looking forward to seeing some Indiana Jones stories in future issues. ((So are we. Hint!))

Martynn, 361 McCully St. Pittsburg, PA. 15216.

One would think I would know FACETS 6 by heart after spending that companionable evening at Paulie's place collating between kitties! Huh. If the honorable Mr. Ford could only see what sort of slave labor, sore butts, paper cuts, and late zombie hours go into the production of his "UNOFFICIAL" fanzine he would have to admit that it is not just "another useless experience". At least it must build character. The other character-building occurs between the covers of the zine, and may I say that it was my pleasure to share the cover honors with Judi -- that's a very amiable and throughly recognizable undisguised and genuine HF on the bacover! Now on to the guts of the zine. I shall dissect them gently, unlike a certain Corellian delt with the innards of a tauntaun because regardless of their relative merit individually, each contribution is worth the time to read simply because it is a tribute to our Hero...which leads me gracefully into considering Sheila Paulson's poem (dramatic dialog?) of the same name. It's a wonderful idea, Han's thoughts after being incarcerated in the rebel sickbay (one of his favorite locations, according to fan writers of the hurt-comfort ilk) and the structure of Sheila's poem is admirably constructed with equil time given to his reactions to each of his solicitous visitors incidently revealing not only his own personality traits but his attitude toward Luke, Leia and Chewie too. Unfortunately, though, I didn't care for the speech pattern Sheila set up for Han this time 'round. Usually I love her stuff, but this Han reads more like Tommy Lillard ("Comin' in here kissin' me. Shit!") than the slightly more eloquent Corellian. I'm not too keen on the characterization in the section with the princess either. Granted, from the expression on his face at the end of SW, Solo is not enamored of the Hero role, however, I'm more inclined to favor Jean Ann Berger's Han who cunningly uses his battle wounds to draw sympathy from the usually abrasive Leia. Even before we were aware of the romance between princess and pirate in TESB, Solo wasn't exactally avoiding the regal embrace at the end of SW. Dianne Wickes provided a well-balanced set of little charactures to accompany the poem with the sleeping Han the best, in my estimation, probably because the tilted angle of the head minimizes the nose which she tends to exaggerate (see her Kenny throughout "Changes"). She also gives Han a more-or-less Kenny haircut while the Corellian coiffure is usually smoother and more feathered than spiky--although perhaps he's just messed up from the injury.

For authenticity and more recognizeably Ford-faces *and* characterization, kudos and high praise got to Kelly, Paulie, and, indirectly, Beth Bowles, for "Home is the Hunter". I remember hearing the germ of the idea during my last visit to the Ford bastion of Kazoo but it in no way prepared me for the superb finished story Kelly rendered. All in all, it is a perfect Tommy story --- just enough danger, sentimentality, moral lesson, and local color to make "Hunter" one of my favorite stories in the zine. *And* despite early trajic drafts, a happy ending materialized and that too fits in well with the cockeyed optimism of Tommy and Avram. The humor of the sleepy stable boy and the old nag relieve the tension handily mid-story too. I liked Kelly's theory of Tommy taking an honest job with minimal pain too. Lillard might enjoy his lawless escapades but his easy affinity with Avram and his adaptability to extreme situations and different cultures (he manages to survive the monastery as well as the Indians...) lead this reader to beleive that steady pay, lack of inconvenient pursuit and a loving friend *would* be sufficient to keep Tommy on the right side of the lay--and Kelly made that notion all the more believable. Her characterizations are perfect, even down to feisty Rosalie who has the presence of mind to call Tommy and is not so sweet and meek that she won't admit to thoughts of vengence toward Diggs. Paulie's wonderful Remington-like illos are perfect garnish and it's impossible to decide which is more faunchable, her Tommies or ner horses. Even her bleary Avram is just right!

That's a very nice somber head study of Han by Catherine Strand illoing "Sixteen Runs". "Occupational Hazard" is yet another competant-but-not terribly exciting account of the state of affairs preceding Solo's accptance of the famous charter to Alderaan. This is not to cast aspersions on Oslo's story, though, because it is well-written and the characterization of Han is right on target. I especially liked some of the little touches such as Han making the word "principle" sound like an obscenity". Only one little error: if I remember my SW novel correctly, Han is still cuddling the winsome humanoid female when Chewie brings Kenobi and Luke to the Corellian. *I* thought Blake's cartoon on P. 23 was a riot but I received a note in the mail for FACETS that you might want to print in the LoC column seperately. ((We did 3 letters back. Thanks for fowarding it.))

Jeffords' "Second Time Around" is another oft-interpreted story which did not lose interest by this particular version. I like not only Chris' characterization of the enterprising young Han but also her Lando, who comes out rather likeable and certainly no fool with a much more interesting and convoluted background than some are willing to grant him. Chris' own character Krippo the Frith, gets better each time he turns up in her Han-stories. Non-human characters aside from Chewie's kith and kin are rare in SW stories for some reason. Chris' only fault in my eyes is her stylish tendency to great long descriptions of action in scenes and characters' reactions which could be more synamic or complimentary to the story's flow if they were represented by some economical dialog. Han's "explanation of a few facts" to Lando on p. 31 takes up one third of a page of reduced print and even the redoubtable Solo could never be that long-winded. The exchange of Chris' "star and comet" game for sabacc still carried through well and I liked the way Lando and Han still wound up friends at the end, if for mutual admiration only. Becky Aulenbach hasn't quite gotten Lando down yet, but her young Hans are wonderful! She has that less-angular youthful cast to the Corellian's face that typify Harrison in his 20's. Oh, yeah, forgot to mention Pam K.'s predictably delightful Han and Jabba for "Occupational Hazzard"--that Hut is expertly bloated and nasty and not-even-human in a subtle four-armed way. Trying to read the lettering on the windows is driving me crazy too!

Elyse's "Honest Job" deserves its own paragraph. It's a cute tale without a lot of gut-wrenching danger but a lot of nicely sarcastic laughs as a fitting substitute. Somehow, Fras only reminds me of "Animal" on the Muppets. I keep picturing his companions leading him about on a chain attached to a spiked collar. Blake's pictorial rendering of Fras only heightens that amusing resemblance. My other favorite business is poor Han and those nasty-tempered little lizards. I keep having this hysterical mental image of the little monsters gnawing ferociously at his ankles and elbows; that and Solo awakening in the hospital with tiny teeth marks all over his decorative body (*that* would have been an illo for Martynn...). Blake's illo of one of the slavering little beasts is most appropriate, as are all of his illos which are all admirably balanced and not only enhance the action of the story but flesh out Elyse's invented characters just by their facial portraits alone (p.46). Blake also has a good command of black areas and shadows.

Catherine Strand's "Broken Eagle" would be negligable, especially in consideration of the inexplicable use of eagle imagery instead of falcon, were it not for that incredibily lovely and haunting rendering of the carbonite effigy. It does indeed break one's heart to look at it and the pointilism is well executed.

If I was a bit unenthusiastic about Sherry Magee's "Heroe" I am, in contrast, wildly in love with her fascinating continuation or (perquel) for "Home for Christmas" ((FACETS #5)) that enlarges and fleshes out Kenny Boyd so lovingly in every little detail. She continues his post-HEROES development with as much logical believability as she recreates (or newly-creates) a past in a set of flashbacks that fit into the jigsaw of Ken's life as though a natural part of the original character. She shows us *why* he was *not* a hero to begin with, just a simple kid with dreams. Sandy also rounds out the revelations on Ken by acting as a sounding board to draw him out of his shell and spark reminiscences, and in the process creating a very worthwhile character herself. It was enlightening to go back and reread "Home for Christmas" after "Changes". Pity Sherry has more but chooses not to share. Wickes' illos, although more in the line of caricatures of Ford, have a very good composition and bold style.

I had admired Hamilton's stunning illo for "He Who Flies the Falcon" when it arrived in from the printer's last May and the finished combination of art and poem is lovely indeed. Daphne's style is simple and almost stark on the face but the delicate aurora background softens the effect. I liked Chris Cohea' purple peaon to Solo even better than the illo. The images in the main verses are indeed wonderful and quite apt, especially the sensual water simile.

Eva Albertsson's boundless imagination and inventiveness is a never-ending source of amazement and amusement to me. Her latest off-the-wall contribution "Intergalactic Colloquy" is a charming addition to that source. Once the reader very willingly suspends disbelief, the dialog, flows along quite naturally. Eva has Han's ironic sense of humor well matched with Ford's equally irascible tone and manages to slip in just enough throw-away references from Han to truly tantalize the reader with snatches of unchronicled adventures. And of *course* Solo would consider himself the better looking of the two! My most urgent reaction to the entire piece was to fervently hope Eva might write some more of thses enlightening dialogues between HF and his characters, say, with Indiana Jones, perhaps. Stephanie Hawks captured the wry grinning, caluclating nature of Han

versus Harrison's grumbly exterior that had an expression hinting at his perpetual incredulity at the strange "useless experiences" fan and his bosses continue to impose upon him.

Six letter this size, a bouquet of roses and a date with Han Solo would be poor and paltry thanks indeed for Susan Matthews beautiful Corellian monologue "Westron Wynde". Any female, let alone the shy Thera, would nave beer honored and throughly entranced to be the object of such sweet ponderings. Facile poetess that she is, Susan reveals not only a great deal about the inner strengths and maturation of Han which may, perhaps, see light in REVENGE OF THE JEDI (or so is the hope of this reader) but also paints a very comprehensible picture of what so many of us more-or-less liberated humanoid females would like a man to look for in a life partner: reasonable independance, affection, devotion and interest of a friend as well as a lover and above all the ability to see the man as a person and another companion sapient entity, not simply as an 'accessory to pleasure'. Better yet, Susan manages in amongst all the philosophic ramblings to inject a subtle rhythm and rhyme in an almost casual manner that suits the speaker perfectly. This is, without a doubt my very favorite verse Susan has ever penned about Han and I'm still humbly touched and grateful that my Mary-Kitty-Sue was invited to share the spotlight.

Wanda's slouching contemplative Corellian for "Scoundrel" is perfectly edible! And that decorative rogue is a mere intriguing appetizer for the lively, full course of Corellian delicacies Wanda serves up in Berger's "Bad Case of Corellian". From the tip of his aching head to the soles of his boots the poor battered Han on P. 93 would be enough to incite far less protective hearts than Leia's. But maternal instincts pale before the splendid display of Corellian anatomy in the following picture and the wide-eyed appreciation has to contend with guffaws for the bewildered faces on those poor little alien slavers flying about. Then as if the aforementioned weren't enough, Wanda had to throw in that incredible, calculating, come-hither Han poised over the bed -- a sight sufficient to give even a strong-willed princess second thoughts. Bravo, Wanda! As for the story she so ably illustrated, I had mixed reactions. The premise of the piece was at once a quite attractive and perfect vehicle for exploring princess/pirate relations. Even better, Jean Ann shows a real comic flair for portraying an alien viewpoint of Han's temper and Leia's stubbornness. The slavers themselves are a clever joke making fun of the usual sf concept of alien slavers as enormous, ferocious beings. The punchline, of course, is that wonderful misunderstanding among Luke, Chewie, and the slavers as to just what sort of issue Han and Leia's confrontation produced. My only problem with the story was in accepting the spanking scene and Leia's disobeying of Han's orders in the malfunctioning ship. We saw in TESB that Organia is throughly capable of piloting even the *Falcon* so I have trouble believing she would make such an ill-fated move in a smaller craft and do so in direct opposition to orders from an even more seasoned spacer.. Considering Han's frustrated, abused state I can easily accept his raging attack on the little slavers - after all, he rallied enough strength to punch Lando after being tortured by Vader in TESB. Han is a very physical character. I do, however, have great difficulty believing that Solo would spank the princess, even in a state of anger comparable to that in "Bad Case". He may be be a scoundrel but neither SW nor TESB showed him to be a brute and he's scarcely as intimate with Leia at this point in SW (pre-TESB, I assume since he's not in carbonite and certainly neither of them are displaying the mellow/passionate affection they did on Bespin) as Petruchio is with Kate. The action seemed as out of character with the Corellian who handled the princess like glass even in the panic of the trashmasher in SW as did Leia's almost immeadiate acceptance of the indignity. Aboout the only point I can recommend on the scene is the keen tension that builds through Leia's dubious first assessment of Han's threat. After that, the "climax" was, to me, somewhat of a disappointment. In any case, the story has merit for it's humor and is, whether good, or not-so-great, certainly not boring!

Monfette's "Ballad" and portrait are above average in natural-sounding rhyme and likeness, respecitvely.

Finally, Kelly puts the icing on yet another Harrison cake with her gentle musing of Tommy Lillard in "Thoughts". The vernacular is as perfect as the images he conjurs up in rough-hewn manner, that wayward angel of a cowboy. Wanda gives Paulie good competition in the Remington Western authenticity category too. I can't help thinking that Tommy seems to favor longer, less kempt coffure and, on the trail, perhaps more of a stubble on the jaw, but the expression of wistful dreaming is mightily engaging.

Verdict: FACETS 6 need not be buried in the sand for a couple of thousand years to be worth quite a bit to the avid Ford fan!

ADDENDUM FOR MARKETPLACE

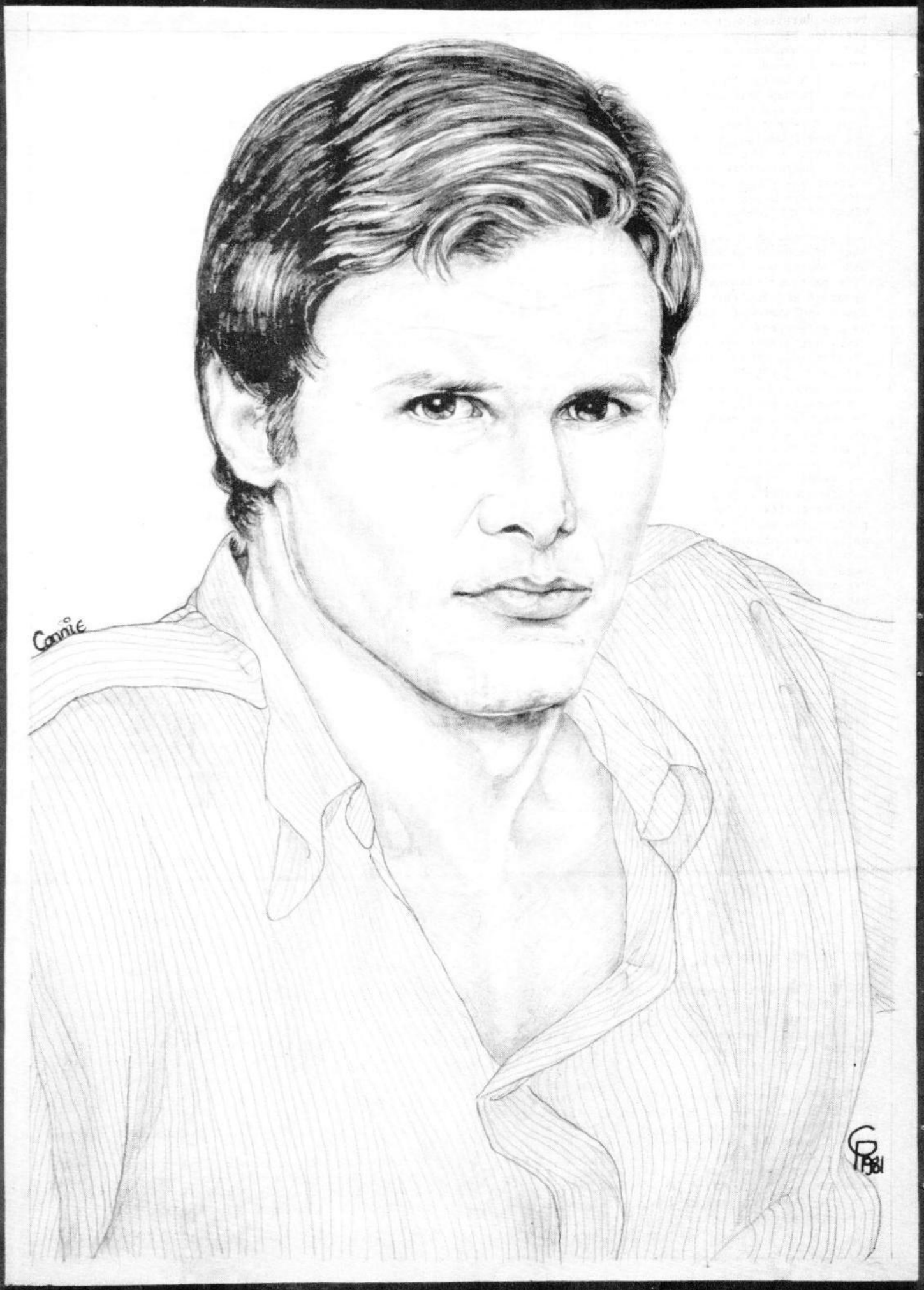
PHOTOS: Elyse Dickenson, 43 Topfield Rd., Wilton, Conn. 06897. Has the most incredible collection of off-screen photos you can imagine, all 35 mm, all beautiful. Mostly HF, but lots of others including Hamill, Langella, Selleck, and more. SASE for price and list of photos.

KESSEL RUN, from Michelle Malkin, 6649 Castor, Ave. Philadelphia, 19149. I managed to misplace your ad, Mickey, so bear with me. We picked up this zine at Media and just wish our first effort had been as good, it's one of the prettiest zines I've ever seen. The stories are good and the art is fantastic. I think #2 is on it's way, so drop Mickey a SASE, it's one of the best zines out. (That good enough??)

PHOTOS: Suzanne Jenkins, 4720 NE 74th Ave., Portland, OR, 97218. Has 35mm photos from Harrison's films, TV & talk show interviews. Also some Neil Diamond in concert and more. Will trade for in person photos, especially foreign. SASE for more info.

AD INFORMATION

Please try to keep your ad approximately 50 spaces long and not more than 15 lines high, or less. We do not run ads any place else in the zine and never outside the Marketplace column. There is no charge to run an ad in FACETS. Please try to have ads for #9/10 to us by mid-April '82. Thanks.


Connie

Gestalt

So many facets, and each one reflects
a part of a man, each shard intersects
With each, to form a gestalt. Gaze at one,
Look ong; each different, and yet each belong.
So many faces -- a soldier come hom
So broken on the rack of war; or roam
With one who guides a gentle rabbi west,
Putting aside his shady ways; a best,
A true friend he becomes. A solider lives
When he has reason to, this soldier gives
His love back to the man who held her first --
His honor is his life, and yet his curse.
See then a man who flies alone; he'll go
To death for friends, and yet remain solo.
A mercenary; reluctant rebel,
The end of this story time yet will tell.
Another bit, yet shining bright to see,
A man immersed in archaeology,
Lusting for the past. All these have been shown,
Each separate part, each known and yet unknown.
So many facets; the future will hold
Components yet to be. Thses will unfold,
Man and child, friend, stone without a fault,
Together form the ultimate gestalt.

Marcia

Wickes

The Ganna II Affair

Martie Benedict

illustrated by Wanda Lybarger

The dangerously deceptive Millennium Falcon boomed through the atmosphere of Weylan's Reef. A battered-looking tramp freighter, she featured a pair of deadly quad-mounted guns and more boost than an Imperial Cruiser.

At her controls in the cockpit jutting out to her starboard side were a pair also dangerously deceptive--copilot and First Mate Chewbacca, a 7-foot tall Wookiee, and her captain, Han Solo. At the moment they were engaged in a tricky bit of flying that creased Han's brow in a frown of concentration.

"Give me TFS downrange," he said. "We're going to have to set her down in that next series of hills or forget the whole thing."

Chewie switched Terrain Following Sensors fore-all and Han scanned the readout carefully. Coming in through the Reef's sensor web to avoid tagging and ident had been a neat trick of slip streaming a giant ore barge, but staying beneath the web's invisible pulses called for maneuvers more suitable to a land speeder than a supra-light starship. Nevertheless, Solo survived and occasionally prospered in the dubious business of smuggling because of his uncanny instincts, seasoned spacer's reflexes and a willingness to take hair-raising chances for a profit.

Presently, seeing the spot he wanted, Han hit full braking thrusters and brought the Falcon to a dust-stirring hover between two purple hillocks. Sensor scan showed nothing out of the way. The land was wide and quiet. He set her down, shutting off all but emergency systems, although he kept her engines simmering.

Leaving Chewie to initiate the pre-arranged signal through the como board, Han shot the main hatch and descended the ramp. A youthful figure, his audacious good looks belied a cynical reserve as he leaned against the ramp strut, arms folded. He wore military trousers bearing the eye-catching Corellian bloodstripe. On his right hip, low and strapped down tight, was a business-like custom fitted blaster in a fast-draw holster.

A faint buzzing filled the air around the ship just on the edge of hearing but insistant--the signal which should alert his customers that their goods had arrived.

Presently, Han saw several greenish tubular shapes undulating over the lavender landscape in the direction of the Falcon--Roodelits, the reptoid dwellers of the Weylan's Reef out-back. Han had agreed to ferry their cargo from a Drome intermediary with an uncut gemstone up front and the promise of a thousand credit gratuity on the other end. He had not inquired as to the cargo, supposing it to be utilitarian items necessary for survival in the bleak and spartan Old country, although the necessity for secrecy puzzled him.

But the eager chittering and liquid sucking which passed for language among the Roodelitti and an excited, festival air about it which made him think they were gearing down for a big blow out. "Hey, Chewie, shut down the commo," he hollered up the ramp, "and get out here and do some translating." Although the giant Wookiee spoke only his own growling language, he understood a sizeable number of alien tongues and often served as interpreter in the course of their many and varied business deals.

The Roodelits group had grown to a crowd now, a writhing mass of meter-long beings with large ovoid heads and narrow, intelligent features. They gathered around the Falcon's ramp, susserating and clicking as Chewie stacked several cargo cases on the ground and prized one open to display its contents.

At the sight of the objects thus exposed, the already agitated Roodelits appeared to go into paroxyms of jubilation. They surged forward but halted nervously at Chewie's abrupt bark. One Roodelit separated himself from the press and came forward, head raised to about the level of Chewie's knee. He spoke for a moment in what was to Han an incomprehensible farrago of glottal stops and saliva, and ceremoniously proferred Chewie a small skin pouch. Having done this, the Roodelit bowed twice, made another nonsensical noise and coiled around, lunging for the open cargo case with a high-pitched whistle.

As though it were a signal, the rest of the slithering mob joined in, pulling out plasti-wrap containers which they tore into enthusiastically. Chewie, watching the melee with a grin, passed the pouch to Solo who checked it out with his customary prudence where money was concerned. It did indeed contain the thousand credits. Not bad, Han thought judiciously, for running a load of..."Chewie, what was in those cases anyway? From the way they're carrying on you'd think it was high caliber jet juice."

The creatures had succeeded in opening all the cargo cases and emptying them of the containers; plastiwrap now littered the ground where pairs, triads, quarteles and occasional single Roodelits squirmed and rolled about as though, well, Han wasn't sure exactly what, but it had an odd look to it. "Well," he asked the grinning Wookiee, "what in blazes IS that stuff?"

Chewie hooted merrily.

"IT'S WHAT! You mean we've been hauling around porno for SNAKES?"

Chewbacca was laughing so hard now that he was obliged to lean against the other ramp strut. Han muttered a choice oath, then he too was struck by the ridiculousness of the spectacle and began to laugh helplessly.

The sounds of their hilarity mingled with the cacaphony of the orgiastic reptilians. And for a while a minor tumult enlived the stillness of the Weylan's Reef outback.

* * *

Zilk was a medium-sized facility which, like spaceports throughout the galaxy, boasted its share of carnal divertissments. Han had chosen it, however, not for these, although he was far from eschewing them, but for its proximity to their recent delivery. A short hop overland seemed preferrable to trying to beat the sensor web and the ever-present patrol ships. And until he'd forged an ident and exit permit he thought it politic to remain planetside and, in short, take it easy.

To this end he and Chewie were getting pleasantly swozzled in one of Zilk's less reputable cantinas.

He was eyeing a particularly gorgeous Kemerian barmaid whose obvious assets were barely covered with a few scraps of cloth, when his attention was diverted by a noisy altercation at the bar.

A man of striking appearance was good naturedly bearing the brunt of a young drunk's vituperation. About Han's height, he was older, though it was difficult to tell by how much. He had a leonine head of thick, dark hair shot with silver and a magnificent handlebar moustache beneath which a dazzling smile flashed. He was dressed in a black body suit and high boots.

There was something very familiar about him which Han strove to register. Then as the man in black cocked hands on hips, Han saw the roto-cross bikers' vambraces and remembered.

At that moment the drunk, apparently infuriated by his inability to provoke the other took a swing. The older man sidestepped easily and caught the blow on one of his 'braces. Drunk as he was, the antagonist reeled with the painful shock of impact. Staggering back against the bar, he hollered over his shoulder, summoning reinforcements. At once a motley crew of punk-types appeared, converging on the lone biker who had not lost his smile, although Han noted a certain feral cast to it now.

He had put his back to the bar, assuming a deceptively relaxed stance from which he could move instantly in any direction. Two punks came at him at once. At the last moment he moved. His shielded forearms came up in a wicked ebony flash, warding off the grappling attack on his right, while his left foot shot out perpendicular to catch the other assailant with a breath-stopping blow to the midsection. In one arcing swing he threw his weight onto the left foot, jerked the other attacker's arms behind his back at a joint-cracking angle and, leaning back, planted his right foot on the kid's rear and sent him sprawling in Han's direction.

Immediately, three others joined the fray. The super agile biker took out the first one's face with a ferocious forearm smash, but the other two executed a clumsy but effective gang tackle that brought all three of them sliding in a tangle across the hastily cleared spot at the room's center.

One of the punks managed to straddle the biker's back, only to be heaved clear as he came up with a surge, rolling sideways and cracking the youth's jaw with a bare fisted blow. The other threw himself on the man's back and went for a strangle-hold. At the same moment the original assailant felt recovered sufficiently to launch himself at the struggling duo. The biker saw him coming and tried to work a shift that

would give him the necessary momentum to deliver a swing kick, but the first punk shunted in under the booted blow and grappled the older man's knee, giving it a wrenching twist that took him off balance.

With a crash he slammed into Han's table, the scrappy assailant still clinging tenaciously to his neck. The biker managed a wry grin. "Sorry, spacer, it hasn't exactly been my day," he rasped, laying full out in a swirl of Ebla beer to bring both feet up and cram them like pistons into the first punk's chest. As he shot backward, skidded into the bar and collapsed like a pile of dirty laundry, Chewie inconspicuously reached out and snapped the wrist of the last remaining assailant. He rolled away with a howl of pain, and the biker stood up gratefully.

He brushed himself off, still dripping Ebla. "Thank you, there, Wookiee," he nodded, "and, again, friend, sorry for the fracas."

"No problem," Han said. "Have a seat. I'll buy you a drink."

The biker accepted the invitation with good humour. "My name's Ben Adrick," he said with the openness of one who makes his living on the right side of the law.

"You roto-cross, don't you? I saw a holo of your last Galactic Run. You're damn good. I'm Solo, and the bone masher there is Chewbacca, my First Mate."

Solo was not in the habit of asking questions, but Adrick's affable manner, combined with his own curiosity, got the better of him. "So what is a roto-cross champion like you doing on Weylan's Reef?"

Adrick looked ruefully into his beer which the stunning Kemerian had just set before him. "Not much, I'm afraid. I was on my way to the Universals on Ganna II when my transport developed jump trouble. She's doing down time now and the only other liner bound for Ganna will get me there just about in time to watch the finish."

"That's bad," Solo said tipping Chewie a look. "But," he continued, "we just unloaded freight and it's clear skies for us, so you got a ticket to Ganna II if you want."

Adrick's seemingly irrepressible spirits bounced to the fore again, and his grin split the luxurious moustache. "You're on, Solo! That is, if you can get me there in less than three time-parts?"

The smug look that Solo pulled was one with which Chewie was very familiar. "My ship can do it in half that. The Falcon's one of the fastest things out there."

Adrick cocked an eyebrow. "The Millennium Falcon? Then you must be Han Solo. The day's turning out better than I expected." They traded grips.

"Cargo?" asked Han.

"Just my machines. And there's my mechanic, Bari. He was suppose to meet me here."

"Well, collect your gear and your man and meet us at docking bay Six. Right? Oh, by the way, what was that scrap about, anyhow?" He jerked his head toward the bay area where the last of the victims of Ben Adrick's flamboyant martial style were being towed away.

"That? I don't know," he looked faintly puzzled. "The youngster must have had me confused with someone else." His grin flashed, "He called me an over-the-hill dust buster."

Han watched the figure of Ben Adrick saunter from the room in a lazy biker's walk. Despite himself, he was impressed.

* * *

In the enthusiasm of engaging a lively charter, Han had momentarily forgotten the necessary detail of forging the ident. He now sat at the Falcon's main computer busily programming into it a landing code number and exit permit. That he should not have been able to do this bothered Solo not at all. That he could, delighted him, and he gave a mental thank you to the law-bending techs who had given his computer the capability. It gave him an edge, and every edge helped.

Presently Chewie called from below where he was running an outer-systems check with the docking bay's portable monitor. Han punched up the last of the coded entry data, and went back to meet Adrick.

The biker was standing beside a repulsor-lift cargo handler which held a seam-sealed case several meters square. He was looking up dubiously at the Falcon's somewhat ramshackle exterior. Solo watched him from the hatchway, hand on hip. He was used to it. "Never mind what they tell you, Adrick," he said, "A ship is not a woman. It's not how she looks on the outside that counts."

"I'll trust you for it," Adrick replied.

"You will if you want a shot at the Universals. Chewie, stow the bikes in forward-3. I'll finish the hullcheck." The shaggy co-pilot whuffed assent and shambled off to engage the cargo tractor that would lift and load the precious machinery.

"Where's your tech?" Han asked, operating the monitor scan.

"Beats me. I don't want to lift without him, but if he doesn't show soon..." he looked around as though his glance might summon the absent Bari.

"Any time you're ready, Adrick."

The older man shrugged. "I left messages everywhere I could think of. He'll just have to grab the next transport and meet us there."

The lift-off was uneventful. Automatic devices in Zilt's computer bay probbed the Falcon with invisible pulses, logged her ident and exit permit, and graciously passed her through the sensor web.

Han was leaning back with his left hand extended, leisurly punching up jump co-ordinates at the navigator's station when Chewie growled a warning. All attention forward, Han registered the starboard screen showing him a pair of recon cutters coming up fast. The como board was silent.

"They're not Reef Patrol...What do they want with us?" he demanded. As if in reply the forward ship loosed a shot over the Falcon's bow that brought her shields on full. "Yeah! I KNOW they want us to stop!" he snapped in response to Chewie's roar. "How'd you get so clever so quick?"

Han threw the Falcon on her side giving the attackers a low targeting profile and cut between them, wondering how he was going to complete feeding the jump coordinates to the navicomputer before the cutters boxed him in. They appeared too small to mount much tractor pull, but they were nimble and over-powered and, swift as the Falcon was at supra-light, she was at a disadvantage at space normal.

Solo thought furiously, diving now to avoid a criss-cross lasre pattern the cutters were setting up. They were firing for effect but not disintegration which gave him the feeling that his charter might be more than he appeared. "Adrick! Are those bikes of yours a lot hotter than I think they are?" Ben, seated in the communication service chair behind Chewie, spread his hands in an elaborate shrug.

"Can you pilot?" Solo hollered over the growing commotion of warning devices and Chewie's Wookiee profanities.

"No," Adrick yelled back, "but I can shoot!"

Han turned to see the predatory grin on Adrick's face and matched it with one of his own. He decided to slug it out. Chewie could handle the main controls competantly if not with Han's own brand of inspired insanity, and if they could take out their pursuers, the safety of hyper space would be only a few seconds away. "Chewie, charge up the main guns and give us plenty of clearance. We'll jump when and as we can. Come on," he added to his passenger.

At a dead run they reached the access tube, Solo directing Ben to the belly turret as he scaled the ladder two rungs at a time to man the topside quad-mount.

Ben took a moment to familiarize himself with the big guns' capabilities, but appeared quite at home and even happy strapped into the recoil-cushioned seat, the ship's intercom headset supplying him with compu-data and a great deal of salty Wookiee language. His hands closed on the grips and swung the big guns once in a practice arc.

One of the agile cutters appeared on his screen. Momentarily confused by the grid-approximation, he decided to forget the computer visualization and operate eye-hand. It was how he roto-crossed, and he did it very well.

Solo, meanwhile, had taken a few swipes at the cutters, but it was infuriatingly like trying to look at electrons--the force of the laser canon's blasts seemed to shunt them aside. He reached Adrick over the headset and briefly explained the principle of the Money Lane. "Got that, Chewie?" he added. The Wookiee acknowledged. Han spared a glance down the tube to Adrick's back. With all that hair he looked like a dark relative of the Falcon's First Mate. Han was amused, and oddly comforted.

The cutters were flying in tandem now, not splitting their bet, in an attempt to blow one after another of the Falcon's shields and force a surrender, unacquainted with the unyielding nature of her intrepid captain.

Chewie rolled the ship again and again trying to give the gunners optimum opportunity to intersect laser vectors on the cutters' hull. It was an unusual engagement for the co-pilot, the Falcon much more often than not being on the defensive, concerning him with evasion and beating the heat out into hyper space. Now he was positioning for attack, aggressively maneuvering the ship for maximum kill potential while the pendemonium of the big quad gruns pounded on through the sound dampered field of the turrets.

Ben and Han both had managed to knick the cutters on several runs, but their powerful shielding held, while telltales showed the Falcon's shields draining periously fast in the constant barrage of lase-fire.

The cutters swept into the Money Lane once more, so close together their shields nearly kissed." Hot pilots, aren't you, whoever the hell you are," Han muttered. But it gave him an idea. Quickly he communicated it to Ben.

Chewie threw the ship over again and they lead the cutters with fiery trails, scoring another near miss. Chewie's worried hoot reached Han with the depressing news that the Falcon's shields had just dropped below tolerance. A kid with a flinger could take us out now, Han thought grimly, but shields or no, he was going to give it his best shot.

Chewie flipped the vulnerable starship a final time. With more intuition than skill the two quad gunners directed a desparate rain of lase-fire between the rapidly approaching cutters. Where the trails converged an alarming field of super hot shield shimmer began to expand.

"We got 'em! We got 'em!" Ben shouted.

"Keep it up! Pour it on!"

Suddenly the terrific force of a total shield blow-out hurled the cutters apart and sent them spinning. Without waiting to see the outcome, Han flung himself out of the gunner's seat and down the ladder to one explosion of motion. The co-ordinates racing through his head, he slide to a halt at the navi-computer, punched up the rest of the jump, hoping their little waltz with the cutters had not appreciatively affected anything relevant space-time wise, and yelloed, "Hit it!"

At once the Falcon's hyper light engines cut in warping the limited area inside her drive field and taking her, in one gut-wrenching, wonderful surge, effectively out of existance.

* * *

"Now, suppose we take a look at that cargo," Solo suggested.

"Sure, why not," Ben replied. "You think maybe I'm smuggling something, Captain Solo?" He was amused.

"Let's just say I'm curious to find out why I almost got my tapes wiped for good because I'm hauling a biker to a race."

Solo led the way to forward-3, leaving Chewie to doctor the depleted shield mechanism. Since they didn't actually exist at this point with relation to space normal, little vigilance was required during jump. Inside a ship's drive field, hyper space was perhaps the safest place that a person could (not) be.

Han waited patiently while Ben unsealed the crate, noting the man's equitable good humour appeared to extend even to falling under suspicion of law breaking and also that he was unruffled by the recent shoot out over Weylan's Reef with a philosophical sort of competance that Han, not always noted for his cool temper, admired.

When Ben stood back, the seal seams gave way and the crate's sides swung out and dropped with a rush. Han caught his breath. Mounted in suspensor stassis was a Darga-

Phelan 800 Magnum Sand Cat and baddest looking Blackline Deuce he had ever had the pleasure to see.

Ben grinned with pride, catching Solo's expression. "Nice, aren't they?"

Solo thought his mouth was going to water. He could not have been more impressed if the crate had contained a pair of Estarian senso-stim dancers. "Which one is your main machine?"

"It depends on the course. The Deuce has got a fraction more go, but the Cat has the edge in the turns. You, know," he continued, "I don't like going into the Universals without a mechanic."

"I know roto-crossers," Han heard himself saying, mezmerized by the sleek machines.

"How about if I boost your fee a thousand and you crew for me -- just for this one run, of course. Give them a good check-out before the race."

Han stepped back, drawing himself away from the spell of the bikes, hands on hips. "No, sorry. I run a starship now. I don't crew for anyone," he said, though pleasantly, for he did not want any hard feelings between himself and this man.

"Captain Solo," Adrick said engagingly, "would you consider the job if I threw in your choice of the bikes and a shot at the Universals?" Solo felt his resolve crumble. To hell with it, he thought, a youthful exuberance possessing him. He gave Ben an elaborately appraising look. "Make it the Deuce," he said.

* * *

Without subterfuge the Falcon breached the atmosphere of Ganna II and received landing clearance, an unassuming freight hauler and her law abiding crew.

"If they were after you or your bikes," Han was saying, setting the Falcon down in a shallow docking bay, "and they weren't some poor girl's vengeful brothers or something, then we can probably count on seeing them again. They must have known you were headed for Ganna II. Besides you left messages for your mechanic."

"Yeah, Bari...I wonder where he got to?"

"And," Han said, "odds are there's more than two. Somehow there always is," he added, half to himself. The Falcon settled with a sigh onto her landing gear.

"But I can't even guess what they want with me," Ben sounded puzzled but not overly concerned. "They're good bikes, sure, but that was quite a bit of effort to land a couple of sets of wheels. A reasonably competant smash and grab man could get enough to buy them in a few weeks. And so far as I know I haven't stepped on anyone's toes that hard lately."

"You'd be surprised what upsets some people," Han said.

He had spent most of the jump time back with the machines, going over their responses. The Falcon resounded with the throaty roar of induction roto-drive engines until Chewie had menaced Solo with his bowcaster. Han assumed his partner was indulging in hyperbole, nevertheless, he piloted the Cat back to the deck on its roto-thrust from near the top of the compartment where he'd been checking amplification curves, and contented himself with a quieter brand of tinkering.

Ben had appropriated the accelleration couch and slept most of the way.

Modrell was a wide-open city that Han favored over the controlled, artificial sterility of most of the metro areas under the aegis of the Associated Regent's Combine, an off-shoot of the vast Corporate Sector. It was a frontier town on a planet at the fringes of the ARC Authority where local powers called most of the shots, making it chancy, but an interesting place to live. It was an ideal spot for the annual combination of noise, hilarity, violence and general mayhem of the Universals.

From the spaceport to the Race Masters office was a short hike. Ben and Han walked abreast getting their share of respectful looks, but perhaps fewer than they might have drawn on a more civilized world, for the streets seemed to be filled with gunmen and rakishly tricked out bikers of all descriptions.

"Solo! Hey, Solo!" Han heard a familiar voice hail him from behind. He turned, his face breaking into that intense smile that only lighted up for certain people. Trella Noon was one of them.

Six feet tall and built like a computer model programmed for perfection, she was wearing a hot pink two piece skimp-suit that left something, but not much, to the imagina-

Lybarger '87

A bright and glorious morning whipped past the two bikers. There was a pulsing, vital pleasure to be found in hurling the roaring machines over the unexpected terrain, their powerful roto-drives alternately churning up the dirt and lifting and dropping over natural obstacles with an exhilerating surge that tugged at the pit of the stomach. That they were enjoying themselves was obvious.

Ben was highly skilled, a champion rider who manuevered his flashy Sand Cat with consumate style and control. Han was somewhat rusty, but a natural athlete and a capable biker. Not so stylish as the older man nor as smoothly competant, he nevertheless found he could keep up with him, although he suspected Ben was holding back somewhat.

When they had covered perhaps 25 kilometers of Ganna's wasteland they drew to a sand slinging halt. Ben slouched on the low saddle, legs spread wide and feet planted firmly on the earth. He stripped off the helmet and shook out his luxuriant mane, laughing up at the sky. Solo thought he had seldom seen a man more in his element.

"Nice ride, Han," he said, "You handle that Deuce like a pro."

"It's one sensational machine, Ben," Han replied appreciatively. Not known for his modesty, he still had to give the magnificent bike a good deal of credit. They had eased onto a first-name basis during the camaraderie of the previous evening which had covered several hours of unrestrained hilarity.

"Your Trella is one sensational lady," Ben changed the subject.

"Um. She's entertaining," Han said breezily. "And I don't know about 'mine'--she was giving you all the attention."

"Oh, I'm a novelty."

"Not around here, not during the Universals."

Ben shrugged. "I think she's got enough to go around."

Han had to agree. Who, after all, could be possessive of a natural wonder like Trella? At this very moment, Han knew, the statuesque blonde was cruising somewhere in Modrall botanical park with his First Mate, who enjoyed ascorting a beautiful female as much as the next male.

They were preparing to fire up their bikes for another few kilometers of trial run when a pair of shadows crossed overhead and Han's internal alarms went off like klaxons. With good reason.

The shadows resolved into a big Overland Argosey, a richly-appointed merchant ship, accompanied by a smaller, but heavily-armed, escort which settled to a landing only a few meters away, throwing sand, small rocks and pieces of scant vegatation at them in the backwash of their retro thrusters.

Ducking, turning away from the barrage, Han fumbled with the restraining strap of his blaster and pulled it clear of the holster only to hear an amplified voice from the Argosey command,"No weapons. You're covered. And no tricks! We've got some friends of your aboard." Han heard Chewie's outraged bellow and Trella's very distinct expletive. Han mouthed a few of his own and looked helplessly at Ben. "I think they got us out gunned."

"Nothing to do but wait and see," Ben said.

The Argosey's hatch slid up revealing an armed figure in paramilitary dress. He looked like a lieutenant in some mogul's private army. Gesturing with the lase-rifle he directed Solo to drop his sidearm. Ben opened his leather jacket exposing an unarmed torso. When he was satisfied that the two were rendered harmless, the lieutenant stood aside and a grossly corpulant man thrust himself through the entrance and down the ramp. The mogul, thought Han.

"Good day, gentlemen," the fat man sang. "Lovely day for a ride. I picked up two passengers already in the botanical park and now you two will join me and we'll go for another little jaunt--and if you think I'm bluffing, you're very wrong, En Morgan Ben Adrick!"

Solo started at that and swung around to face Ben, forgetting for a moment the weaponry trained on him. "En Morgon Ben Adrick? You're the heir to the throne of Yaniwess? You?"

"My past is like a dog on the trail of my present," Ben quoted. Turning to the fat man he said, "We're of necessity at your service."

Subdued, Han allowed himself to be frisked then herded aboard the Argosey along with Ben. They could see their bikes being stowed in an aft compartment of the big ship as they were thrust into a forward compartment. There they found Chewie, the delectable Trella and a surprise; Slouching in a corner looking unhappy was the missing mechanic, Bari.

No one had much to say during the rest of the trip. Chewie and Han exchanged a few words and Han was appraised of the manner in which he and Trella had been ambushed. Trella stretched her incredible legs out in front of her, critically eyeing the toes of her intricate sandals. "They worked up my shoes, Han," she said sadly. Ben sat quietly, composed, and watched the jittery mechanic.

Weasly and short, Bari was an unattractive young man with thinning hair and a scraggly beard which appeared to camoflage a receeding chin. Han wondered how Ben could tolerate his company. Catching at his thought, Ben turned to him with a mirthless smile. "He's good with his hands."

It was a while before they felt the vehicle set down. Again the taciturn lieutenant herded them at the point of his weapon, this time across a strip of barren sand and into what looked like an abandoned nerf herder's rendering barn. Not long enough abandoned, Han thought, his nose wrinkling. There they were bidden to seats on the floor while the fat man reposed before them in a suspensor chair brought from the Argosey. Outside, several techs were busily scanning both the roto-cross bikes.

"Now," the mogul began. "You may not know who I am..."

"An idiot who hires ham-handed help," Trella alliterated. "Look what your clowns did to my shoes!"

"Shut up, my dear," the mogul said amiably. Han gave Trella a dig in the ribs. "As I was saying, I am Gorfut Kune. I head an interstellar combine of gem dealers. Not long ago one of my agents on Jerook was relieved of a significant number of uncut gemstones ...Ah, En Morgan Ben, you recognize the name Jerook, do you?"

"Of course! I raced on Jerook less than a standard month ago, and I never heard of you or your damn gemstones."

Kune smiled nastily. "Of course, my dear Prince."

"Prince? He said Prince?" Trella whispered excitedly to Han.

"He's heir to the throne of Yaniwess," Han said out of the side of his mouth.

Wide-eyed, Trella subsided. She leaned against the Wookiee, "A Prince, Chewie, what do you know..."

But Kune was saying, "I happen to know the gemstones left with you, Captain Solo!" he snapped, "You had in your possession an uncut gemstone!"

"Uh, yeah, but I got it..." he stopped. What was he going to say? I got it for running porno for Roodelits?

"You see," Kune said, satisfied that he'd caught the smuggler in a gaffe.

"But," Han sputtered, "I didn't get it from him!"

"Oh course not," Kune said sarcastically. "Now listen to me, you two-bit hustlers," he continued, all pretense of courtesy gone.

"I resent that," said Trella.

"And shut the lady up before we mess up something more than her pretty footgear! Now, you will tell me the whereabouts of the rest of the gemstones or I fry you one by one, starting with her. You've got a couple of hours to think it over, Rik!" He beckoned to a paramilitary and directed him to tie the captives' hands. When he'd done so, four distinctly unhappy humans and a disgruntled Wookiee were left in the uncomfortable and odiferous barn while a chilly Canna twilight lowered, not only the general dark, but their spirits as well.

They snuggled closer together for warmth, Ben and Han being particularly solitic ious of Trella's comfort, and even the weasly Bari insinuated himself next to Chewie's hairy bulk.

"Solo, why is it that these things always happen whereever you are?" Trella asked.

"Me? It's our royal friend here who's got the heat on his case, Sweetheart?" Han was indignant.

"Yeah, but somehow he managed to find you, didn't he?"

"Tell me," Ben interjected, "just how long have you two known each other?"

"Ah, now that's a story," Trella said, and even in the darkness they could tell she was smiling. She settled back against Han's chest, and the others moved closer to listen.

"Once upon a time when I was much younger and much prettier..."

"Impossible," Ben said gallantly.

"I was also much more innocent and I entered a beauty contest on Sampet. The Promenade of Celestial Virgins, it was, and I was qualified.

"Well, our dashing Captain Solo just happened to be on Sampet doing something nefarious and we ran into each other. Se Celestial Virgins were chaperoned, but I always have disliked confinement. Anyway, when he found out I was a contestant in the pageant, he really raised the roof. 'How could I be so stupid? Was I born yesterday?' and on and on." She chuckled at the memory.

"It seems as though the winner, THE Celestial Virgin, was given the honor of being sacrificed to the planetary god. Quaint, huh?" Han, his back against the wall, was grinning up into the dark, remembering.

'So," Trella went on, "Han offered to get me off-planet before the contest, but like the fun-loving gal I am, I wanted to stay and see it through. Besides, I'd looked over the competition pretty well and knew I didn't stand a chance of winning -- those local Sampet fems surely appealed to their horny old god more than an outsized alien, right? Wrong!

"We were all tarted out in the most outlandish costumes you ever saw -- feathers, straps, silks and jewels enough to satisfy the Fetish of the Month Club for a standard year -- and taking a final promenade along a suspended ramp when the official in charge announced the winner . Trella Noon of Sashet!"

"You can bet I was surprised, and scared! I was standing there about ten meters off the floor in this preposterous get-up suddenly realizing that their horny old god had developed a taste for ME, and thinking, 'Han, I changed my mind!' when I heard this

Wookiee holler something. A bowcaster shot came over the ramp and landed near me. Everyone started screaming and milling around up there and we must have looked like a covey of perverted voola-quail. But I had the prescense of mind to take a look at the quarrel. There was this little package attached to it, gee. Chewie had delivered me a miniature suspensor module, and I activated it just as the High Priests came a-running. They had these ridiculously dedicated expressions on, and I swear they would have wasted me then and there. But the suspensor cut in and I jumped clear of the ramp right under their noses.

"The whole place had gone crazy by this time. Their Celestial Virgin was airborne, the priests were hollering their heads off, and Han was guiding me down with a.hand-tractor. About the time he caught me, the security guards had broken up the party and were throwing their weight around, so Chewie tucked me under his arm and we split out the side door."

Trella's voice softened then, the glorious memories flooding back in a moment of untempered pleasure. "I had won the Promenade of Celestial Virgins, you see, but by that time I didn't qualify any longer."

Chewie had listened with the rest, amused at the reminiscence. Now he yaowped something to Solo. "You're right there, partner," Han sighed. "It's a great story but it isn't getting us any nearer a solution to the present problem. So, Ben, why not tell us what the Crown Prince of Yaniwess is doing roto-crossing out in the ARC and boosting gemstones?"

"As to the first part, the Crown Prince of Yaniwess is pretty much persona non grata around the old ancestral palace. My father offered to pay me ti stay away, but I preferred the ups and downs of making my own living. Actually, En Morgan is only a nominal dignity. Kune just used it to try to impress me with his information-gathering abilities. The title passed to my kid brother when I'd amply demonstrated a...well, rather unconventional disregard for the formalities of court life."

Years ago Solo had heard a story about a gala reception on Yaniwess. Dignitaries from all other the ARC had gathered to witness and investiture of the King's eldest son as Prince of the Greater Provinces. But he had apparently had other ideas.

Appearing at the head of the staricase in his magnificent royal robe of investiture, he had waited until all eyes were on him, then the Crown Prince of Yaniwess had thrown back his robe with a flourish and flashed the thunderstruck Lords and Ladies of a hundred worlds. He had dropped out of sight shortly thereafter.

"And when a pretty hot roto-crosser showed up several systems away," Ben continued, "no one thought to connect the two. Until now. But as far as gemstones...I don't know. How about you, Bari?" he added with an edge to his pleasant voice that Solo hadn't heard before.

Bari hadn't spoken at all since they were thrown together earlier that day. Now, he squirmed around next to Chewie, cleared his throat a few times and said, "Oh, you may as well know--you know already, don't you, Ben? I took the gemstones. But I didn't actually steal them," he said hastily. "One of Kune's own people filched them. All I did was agree to transport them to a buyer on Ganna II, but then the transport had a drive malfunction and Kune caught up with us. Well, he caught up with me, you'd gone off with Solo and the Wookiee," he sounded miffed.

"Then why didn't Kune just take the stones and a good piece of your hide? Why'd he come after us?" Ben wanted to know.

Bari didn't sound too happy. "I didn't have the stones. You did."

"Where? They're obviously not in the bikes. They went over those with a scanner, and they frisked us when they picked us up. That's when they found Han's gemstone."

"Uh, Ben," Bari lowered his voice to a whisper, "They're in your 'braces ."

There was a moment of silence while everyone thought of the black plastex forearm guards Ben always wore. Somewhere within their insulated layers of shock absorbing material lurked a fortne. Ben said softly, "Well, I'll be damned."

"It's a good thing they didn't scan us," Han ventured.

"I don't know," Trella said thoughtfully, "maybe if they'd found them they'd have let us go...'o, I don't suppose they would have, would they?"

"Bet on it. We'd be feeding the badlands banshees right now. As it is, it's only a matter of time unless we can think of something."

Trella shifted restlessly. "It reeks of nerf in here," she complained.

"What's nerf?" Bari asked.

"You don't want to know," Han told him, but the mention of nerf set him on a vector full of intriguing possibilities. "Unless I'm way off, this place is a nerf rendering facility and that means nerf oil. Spread out, look for containers, anything full of something that stinks worse than the rest of the place."

"And if we do find some, then what?" Ben wanted to know.

"Well, first of all we lubricate these manacles off..."

* * *

The lone soldier mounting guard outside the nerf barn heard the girl calling. "Hey, Come here whoever you are. We've got to talk before Kune comes back!" Certain there was a trick awaiting him, he nevertheless was bored and, armed with a lase-rifle, felt himself quite capable of dealing with whatever little plan his bosses motley captives had cooked up. He opened the door and shone his flash into the musty dark.

Against the far wall they huddled together miserably, the Wookiee, that terrific girl, (he could hardly take his eyes off her) and the other men--they were all there. He stepped into the barn. They were almost all there.

Han caught the rifle barrel with a hard, underhand smash that sent it up discharging harmlessly into the roof, grasped it with both hands on the recoil and put the stock into the guard's face with bone shattering force. Coming up quick Ben grabbed the fallen flash and killed the light. "That was slick," he said.

"Uh-huh. So far so good. Bring the others and the barrel," Han muttered, moving cautiously out of the barn. He had no idea if his wildly improbable scheme would work, but the way he saw it, the odds were always better on your feet and moving.

Operating that way, Han covered his companions as they rolled a large barrel of nerf oil out onto the sand. The night was chill and star lit and very quiet. They tried to match that quiet as, led by Chewie, they tipped the barrel and began to slosh the slimy, evil-smelling stuff around the entrances to the Argosey and her escort, taking special pains with the extended ramps. Soon, great pools of nerf oil lay before each craft sullenly reflecting the starlight on their viscous surfaces.

Bringing the lase-rifle to bear on the escort gunboat, Han whispered. "Okay, beautiful, let 'er rip!" and Trella let out an ear-piercing shriek that set the desert dogs howling for miles.

Both ships immediately began to discharge armed soldiers who hit the ramps and at once became a sliding, slipping, skidding, crashing tangle. Han had a moment to wonder how many tailbones had been fractured in the initial charge. "It looks like Amateur Day at the ice rink," he shouted, catching a loose lase-rifle and tossing it to Ben.

Chewie howled happily, collaring a pair of soldiers who had slid his way, and relieving them of their weapons after snapping their heads together with a satisfying crack. Even Bari had entered into the exhuberant spirit of the moment and appropriated a blaster.

Placing their shots as well as they could in the dark, the small but resourceful band began to move toward the gunboat, hoping that, where the nerf oil was concerned, fore warned was forearmed.

The gunboat had emptied her crew first, and those who were still ambulatory were trying to work their way out of the trecherous oil while firing randomly in the dark. One shot, delivered by a soldier still very unsteady on his feet, splashed into and ignited the volatile nerf oil. With a terrible roar of combusion, a wall of flame exploded between them and the escort.

"The Argosey!" Han yelled as loud as he could. In the hot, wavering light they could see the bulk of Gorfut Kune poised at the hatchway of the larger ship.

Firing on the run, Ben took him high on one arm and Kune staggered sideways, slipped and tumbled to the ground. Ben dropped on one knee avoiding a hail of supporting fire from the hatch and sent a lethal barrage back, taking out several soldiers and a bit of control circuitry into the bargain.

"Get moving!" Solo shouted furiously, urging the others on quickly toward the big boat as he and Chewie covered the retreat, lase-guns cutting powerful slices of energy through the red-hot billowing shadows.

Bari charged up the slick ramp, losing then regaining his footing. He reached the open hatch, threw a hand around the jamb and was starting to swing inside when a laser bolt took him in the midsection. With a cry he was torn backward and went sprawling limply at the ramp's foot.

Chewie ducked into a crouch. Still on the move he swiped a giant paw at a downed guard, coming up with a concussion grenade from his utility belt.

"Back off!" Han yelled as Chewie lobbed the canister through the hatchway. There was a flash, followed quickly by a whomp! that sent a great burst of debris, some of it human, out the door.

Staggering and slipping gracelessly, they scrambed up the ramp and worked to shot lock the door. "I'm kinda sorry about Bari," Ben grunted, straining at the locking mechanism which his lase-fire had fused.

"It's the breaks," Solo said philosophically, joining him to apply main force on the stubborn lever. "At least he went out kicking." It was a better epitaph than the little mechanic might have expected. Chewie lent a hand. With a jolt the lever dropped and the hatch slammed shut.

Han spun and raced toward the forward control area. "Stay sharp," he threw over his shoulder. "Chewie, come with me!"

As they slid into the piloting seats Chewie growled an interrogative. "Sure I can, Fuzz-ball! I can fly anything that lifts!" As though to confirm his boast, the big engines fired under Solo's deft manipulations and he spared Chewie a smirk. The Argosey heaved her vast bulk off the ground.

They were taking heavy fire aft and Han noted that the unshielded pleasure yacht's rear bulk heads were in immediate danger of giving way. He cursed.

"We're never going to get anywhere like this. Damn! We're fresh out of firepower and this useless bucket must weigh...Chewie, we're backing this thing up!"

"Hoorp?"

"You heard me, back her up!"

Han's manuever was worthy of the ungainly Argosey's limited potential. It utilized her one redeeming virtue, mass, to decisively end the brief attack by the escort ship. He simply sat on her.

"They're getting a little short on head room down there, I think," Han said, watching with interest as the few remaining para miltaries and their boss began to scatter out from under the threatening weight.

Han let her down even further until he heard the pleasant sound of the escort's main drive being permanently disables. "Now, we go!" He said jubiliantly. Chewie joined him in a howl of celebration as the big boat rose majestically and sailed off toward the distant lights of Modrell.

"Trella," Han said, "you look a mess." They were catching their breath in the boat's opulant lounge, all stinking mightily and smearing the elegant appointments with nerf oil. Han was gratefully strapping down his retrieved blaster to his right thigh.

"You should see yourself, Sport!" she shot back. "It'll take more than a sonic shower and one-hour-robo-fresh to make you acceptable company."

"I don't know, Trella," Ben said thoughtfully. "Something about all that oil gives you a certain erotic attraction..."

"That I lacked before. I know." She grinned at him and playfully nudged his knee with a gracefully extended toe. Solo could swear there was a wealth of kinetic communication going on there. He worked on thinking about something else. The Universals started in about eight hours. The bikes were in good shape. But the riders?

* * *

The weary dawn that had greeted them hours before had turned into a fine, hot afternoon. A bedraggled foursome, they had filed into Trella's hotel suite and come near to depleting the hot water capacity in an attempt to rid themselves of the nerf oil. Even Chewie. Then Han had commandered a bed and made the best possible--with perhaps one exception--use of it for a few hours. By the intensified vibrations continuing between Ben and Trella, Han suspected that they had exchanged a few more pleasantries while he slept.

Chewie was itchy. Soaps made for human ablutions disagreed with his skin chemistry, but the others had threatened him with various painful and unpleasant fates unless he showered off.

Now, refreshed and only faintly redolent of nerf, the companionable group passed through the main raceway gate in a ground car, towing the bikes on a rented cargo lift.

Ben had donned his race gear, and Han had invested in a good but subdued set of leathers and a pair of heavy multi-buckled metal rimmed bikers' boots. Neither had opted for helmets, which were not mandatory, preferring freedom and wide-range visibility. Instead they carried filtered goggles and slung dust baffles at their necks. Ben also wore a wide sweat band to hold back his hair.

Trella looked them over approvingly. "I take back what I said earlier. You both look terrific."

"Right back at you," Solo said, with appreciation for the stunning outfit of shorts and corss over she had chosen for race day. She kissed them both warmly, wished them luck and taking Chewie's arm, headed for the bounce tube that would carry them up to one of the suspended reviewing stands encircling the course.

When they were out of earshot Ben turned to Han and asked directly, "What, exactly, are your priority rights there?"

"Nonexistant," Han admitted with a touch of wistfullness. "Trella's like the Oracle of Keth--everyone's welcome to come and ask questions, but she decides who to answer."

The Universals was an open course event, one of only a few remaining in the path of an inexorable tide of civilization and its accompanying beauracratic big brotherhood which sought to protect people from themselves. Anyone--or thing--could enter and a sizeable number did. Only their machines were marginally standardized, all being of the basic roto-cross design: saddle, dual wheels, roto-thrust lifters and the slotted forearm steering bars that terminated in torque-responsive hand grips.

The course itself was a rough circle, 12 kilometer around, which took in some of the worst of Ganna II's badlands. It's most spectacular feature was the Dead Drop, a 1,000 foot canyon that demanded much from a rider.

The race began, appropriately enough, with a gunshot.

Instantly the low rumble of idling machines swelled to a monstrous roar that blew bystanders back and shattered glass a mile away in Modrell. The whole field surged forward, lead bikers vying for the critical hole shot.

Ahead of him, Han saw Ben juke a couple of Maxi-Standards and gun his big Cat at a daring angle for the first tight turn, only to be cut off at the last second by a flashy Synchro-Dyn.

Han was not competive by nature. Those things which he chose to do, he did well. A few of them, better than anyone--and although he enjoyed the challenge of gaming, the necessity of winning this contest did not possess him. Rather he was simply enjoying the bone-shaking workout of his muscles and the exhiliration of speed and power, throwing the more-than-willing Blackline Deuce over the tortuous terrain.

The pack spread out, approaching the halfway point and their first shot at the Dead Drop. Han had taken a quick course in negotiating it from Ben who had run it several times before, but he was still not prepared for the awesome obstacle.

The course led down a narrow rocky chute, suitable for dicing and also for building momentum which was critical, for at the conclusion of, sweeping turn the chute suddenly opened wide into space--a great gap across which the bikers were obliged to lift, turning hard left and down at the mid point, and aiming for another narrow chute mouth cut into the lower cliff face opposite.

Trying hard to recall everything Ben had told him, Han banked off the final curve and shot out over the dizzying drop. He cut in full-lift with his right hand and leaned into the steering bars to bring the bike around. Judiciously eliminating some of the lift torque, he felt the bike settle and, satisfied that she was responding within tolerance, aimed for the slot just as a silver Defiant blew by him dangerously close, its anonymously helmeted rider out for the money...or for blood. Han braked instinctively to avoid a collision at the narrow chute opening, heard the roto-drive cut out briefly and felt an ominous drop. Swearing furiously, he gunned the drive and lift simultaneously and drew up and around in a tight circle, took another shot, and plunged into the chute after the Defiant.

This chute emptied out over a steep lip of rock and gave onto a wide, vacant prospect, a speed section. Here Han took maximum advantage of the Deuce's capabilities

and pushed her howling engine to its limits, hot in the wake of the speeding Defiant. To himself Han thought Ben's assessment of the Deuce as having a fraction more go was a vast understatement.

Soon he was drawing close to the Defiant, and with a surprise he recognized the familiar Sand Cat and the flying silver-flecked hair of the rider not far beyond. Then several things happened at once. Han saw the Defiant's rider aim something at Ben, and Ben, unaware of the sneak attack, swerved right to avoid some desert growth. A red laser bolt whistled into the clump of dry bushes and they blazed briefly.

With a shock Solo realized that they had not left all of the ugly Gorfut Kune's troopers stranded in the desert and, swiftly on the heels of that came the realization there would be no more threats, no more finessing to locate the gemstones. This was revenge, pure and simple. They were out to waste Ben Adrick on the Universal race course, and, for all Han Solo knew,every other biker out there was one of Kune's men.

Although the comforting presence of his blaster was not weighting his right hip, Han disliked traveling light. He slipped a hand under the edge of his snug racing jerkin and drew out a wrist-slip phase beamer. Swinging in directly behind the Defiant he shot out her rear wheel plastrex and she wobbled, skipped and twisted at full torque into a pile of red stones, her rider traveling considerably further. Then Han dialed the juice and strove to catch up with the flying Cat.

They were gearing down for a series of chicanes when Han came abreast of Ben's machine Pulling the dust baffle aside, he yelled one word "Kune!" and mimicked a blaster shot. The older man frowned, pulled his own baffle aside and shouted back an obscene suggestion as to what Kune could do with himself that made Han laugh in spite of the danger. He wondered briefly if Ben would consider dropping out of the race and making himself scarce, but decided that anyone who made his living roto-crossing would not be daunted by some extra obstacles on the course.

As Ben was unarmed, Han figured the best idea was to stick as close to him as possible and phase beam anyone who made an aggressive move over and above the normal necessities of a violent sport. To this end he rode shotgun for several laps, which obliged him to keep up with a very fast and classy biker, consequently improving his roto-cross skills.

If he had counted and identified the suspicious riders correctly, there appeared to be four of Kune's men on the course, five if you counted the Defiant rider with the broken neck.

On the third lap, they removed from action two more who had stalled at the top of a rise and turned back to ambush their quarry. Signaling to Ben, Solo cut in front of him as their bikes glowed for the climb, then he gunned the Deuce hard and came up over the hill hanging low on the side of his machine and shooting around the front wheel at the first of the ambushers. Ben imitated Solo's move but at the last moment he slewed his Cat around, hit the rear lifter and blew the second man out of the saddle with a super-heated blast of roto-drive exhaust.

There was no question of stopping to assess the damage they were doing. It was still a bike race, although the attrition rate was alarming, and not a quarter of the roto-crossers who had started were still on the course.

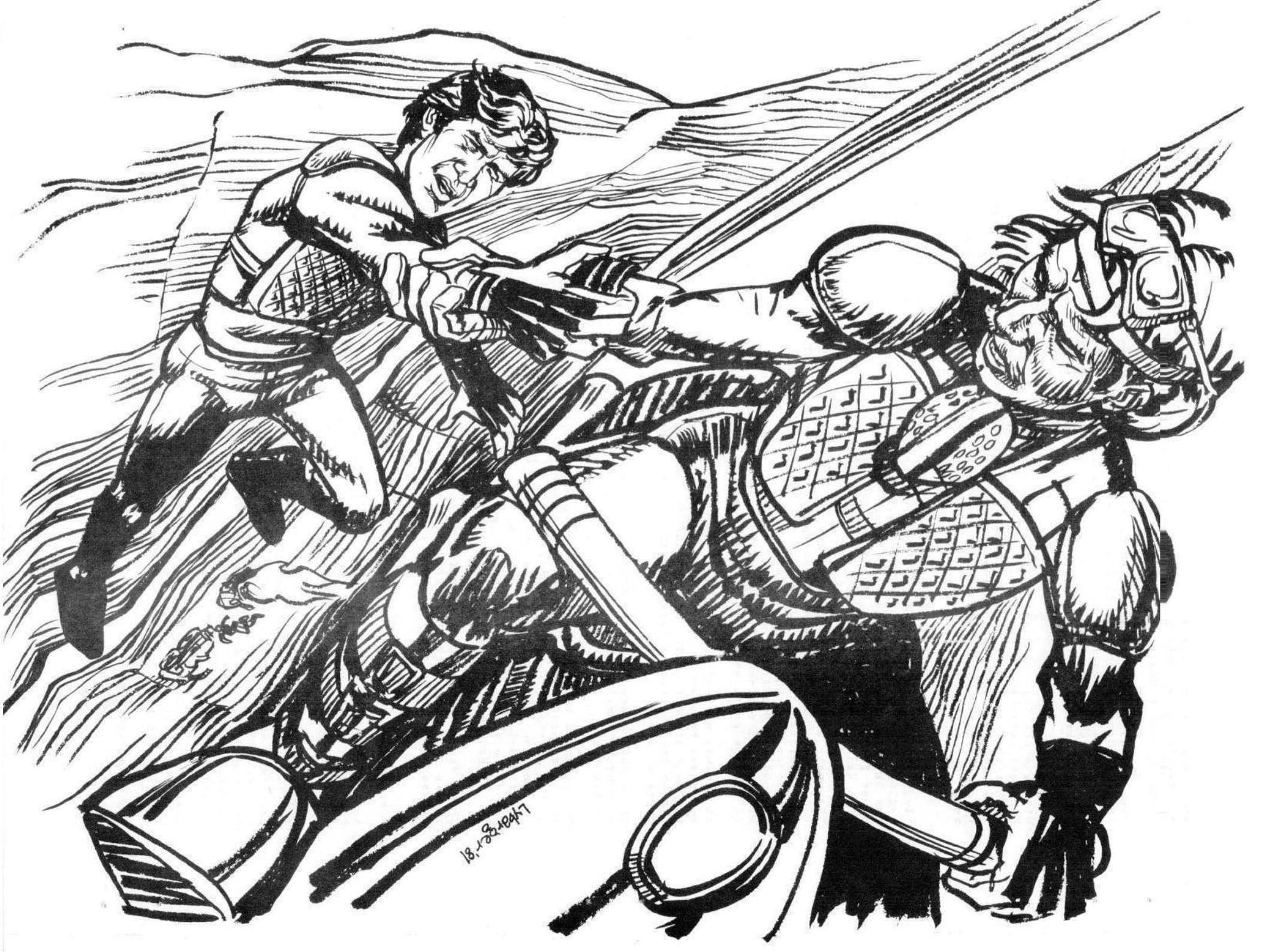
As they hit the Dead Drop for the sixth time the remaining two killers took their best shot.

Ben, slightly in the lead, banked off the final curve and sailed out over the gorge, Han right on his tail. Just then a lase-bolt sizzled past Han's ear and took out a chunk of canyon wall. Looking back he saw the two gunmen hurtling down the chute.

Knowing he could never make the jump and defend Ben's back at the same time, he circled rapidly in the air and fired at the closer of the two, who were now at the chute mouth. His aim was spoiled by a violent updraft, but it was good enough to knick the bike's front lifter. Deprived of sufficient lift torque, the machine shot out of the gap and, when her forward momentum was exhausted, began to arc downward. Solo wheeled again, sparing no thought for the would-be assassin, and caught up with Ben at the turning point.

Suddenly he felt a terrific jolt slam into the Deuce. There was no doubt at all that the final guman had at last connected. The roto-drive cut out for good, and Han knew with dreadful certainty that he was a dead man.

The bike began to drop. With a pained expression he yelled up, So long, dust buster!"



The canyon walls seemed to race past him in a maddeningly speedy upward rush. It became dark and cold. He thought of a girl he'd known on Treel's Lode, and wished he were there.

Suddenly, with an ear-splitting roar, a Darga-Phelan 800 Magnum Sand Cat was beside him and a huge grin flashed out from behind Ben's wind-whipped mustache. "Need a lift?" he hollered.

Catching the man's extended arm, Solo pulled himself off the doomed Deuce and swung a leg over the Cat's saddle. But before he could get a purchase on the machine the pursuing gunman loosed another near miss that rocked the Cat, and Han found himself dangling out over nothingness, the only thing between him and oblivion his desparate grip on Ben's gem-stuffed vambrace.

But he was mad.

Surging up through the despair and death-fear came a great burst of pure hatred and fury. Han aimed the phase beamer at the rapidly closing gunman and didn't let up on the 'fire' until the depleted weapon began to tingle in his palm. Then he watched what was left of the last of the assassins drift in flaming wreckage down onto the canyon floor.

Somehow he managed, with Ben's help, th scramble aboard the Cat's crowded saddle and hang on while the big bike, engine straining under her double load, lifted out of the shadows and split into the sunshine. Han thought it was like breaking the surface of a deep, deadly river.

* * *

"You blew your chance to take the Universals to save my life. That's something to remember," Han said, uncomfortable with gratitude but recognizing its importance.

"And you almost blew your chance to keep on living to save my race. Which one of us is the real hero? I think I owe you one, Junior." They were gathered at the foot of the Falcon's ramp, reluctant now to say good-bye.

"So what are you going to do now?"

"Well," Ben said,"I've been thinking of paying the old homestead on Yaniwess a visit. I'm getting too old for this sort of crazy life. His Royal Majesty my old man is over 80 standard, and my kid brother is dumber than I am. Last I heard he had five star yachts and as many wives. No one needs more than one of each." He had a propriatory arm about Trella's narrow waist. "Right?"

"Right," she agreed. Han had not seen that look on Trella since the Promenade of Celestial Virgins.

"I'm going home, Han," he said simply. "and there'll always be an empty docking bay for you there."

"Clear skies to you both," said Han.

"Oh, one more thing. I bequeath my racing gear to you, including the 'braces. Chewie has them stowed away on board." Solo didn't know what to say. "Forget it! I said I'd boost your fee if you crewed for me. So long. Clear skies." They turned and left the docking bay. Trella waved once and they were gone.

Han was seldom troubled with double-mindedness but now he was feeling the pull of some conflicting emotions. His pleasure at possessing the gemstones was dampered considerably by the loss of Trella. "Chewie," he said after a minute. "You ever hear of Xthax's Second Law of Econo-Dynamics? No? It says that the hotter they are the quicker they flow towards money."

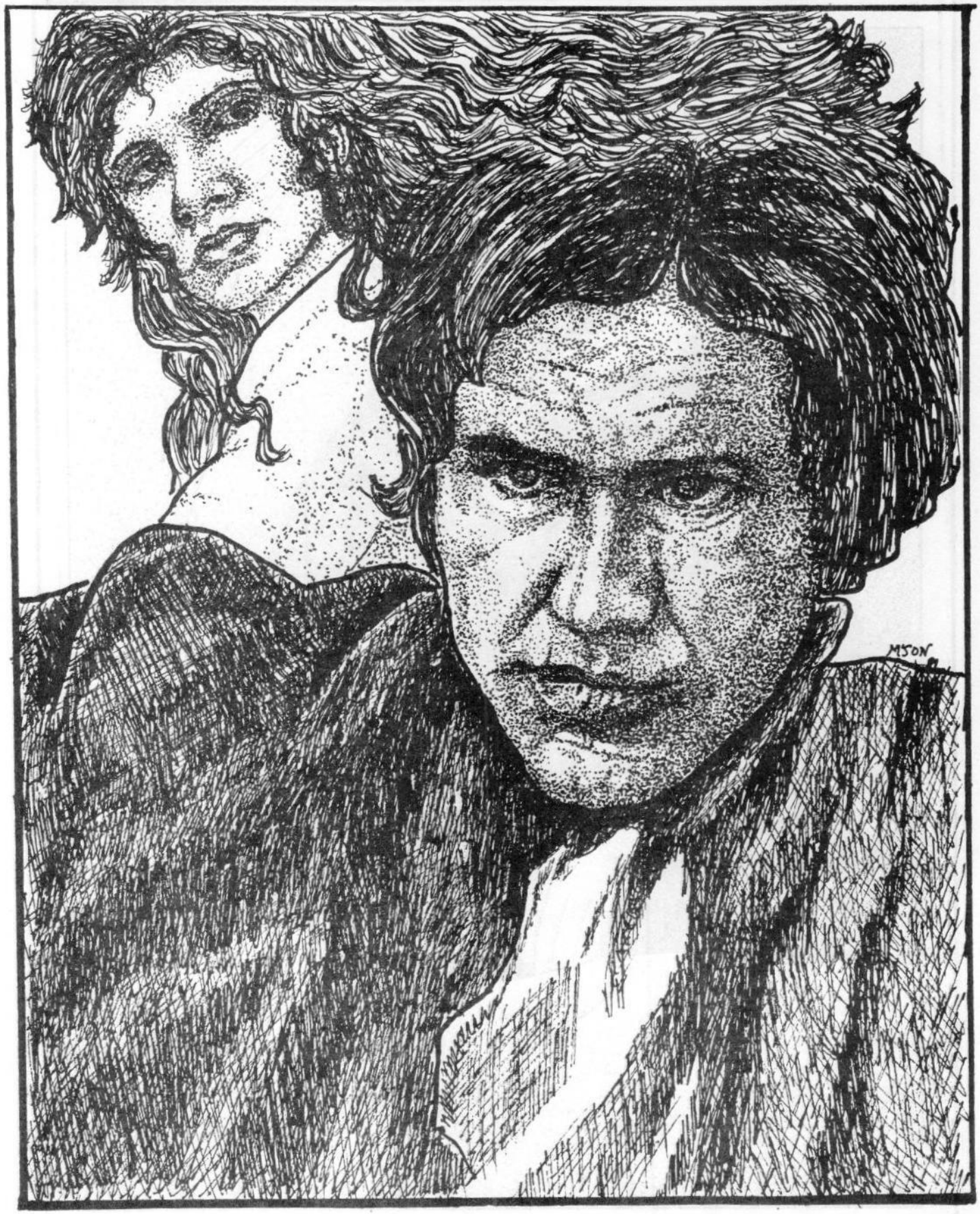
Chewie allowed as how this sounded reasonable.

"Well, partner," Han finished, folding his arms, leaning against the ramp strut and staring at the emply docking bay entrance, "it just went down the old entropic drain."

Hey Lady

Hey, Lady,
I don't want to be in any Rebellion.
I want cash.
Cash can buy your way out of jams,
   or it can buy you a name,
   ya know, something to be reckoned with.
Or freedom, it'll buy that, Your Worship.
All expenses would be taken care of.
Hey, Lady,
Where's the reward?
It can't be hanging around here,
   trying to act like a hot shot hero or something.
It can't be looking into your dark eyes,
   liking it when you let your hair flow down around your shoulders.
Nope, I want the money, Your Highness.
Money, that's more important than seeing you gaze lovingly into my eyes,
   holding your body close to mine.
Me, wondering what the hell I'm running from.
Yeah, just give me the reward and I'll get out of here.
Lady, I'll go, won't I?
Aw, hell, maybe I'll stick around for another coupla days.

Jan Gaut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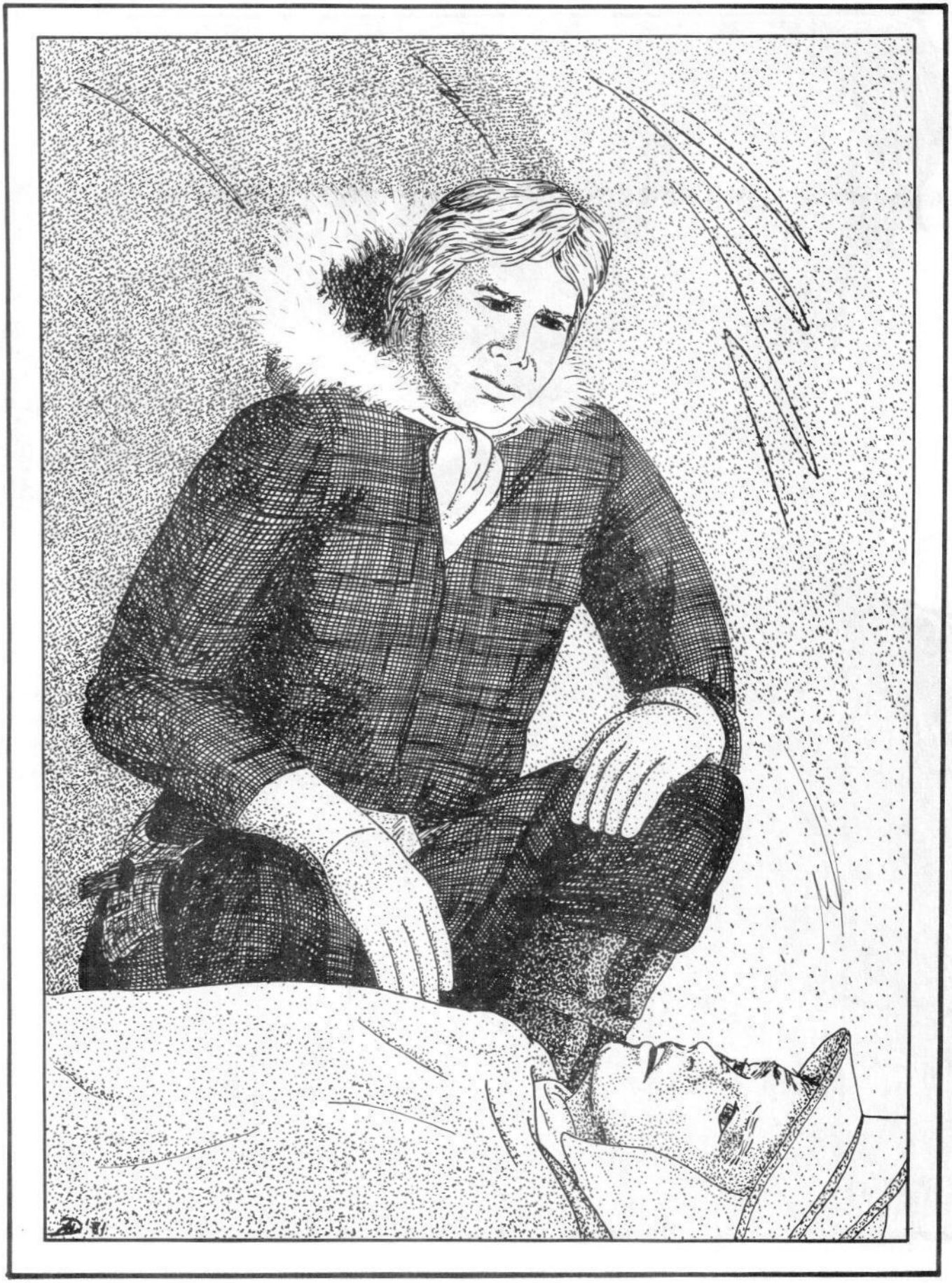


Night Thoughts

Geez, it's cold.
And no offense, kid, but you stink.
Them beasts aren't the sweetest smelling things...

How long can a night be, anyway?

Strange.
Your eyes are open. What do you see?
Not me, obviously. Maybe that Yoda you're mumbling about.
Funny name.
Wonder who he is?

What is all this about Ben, anyway? He's dead.
You're talking as if he were alive. Wish he were -
You get so quiet sometimes.
We'll be laughing at something
then suddenly it's like you're not with us at all.
Sometimes you look strange
Or so scared it scares me.
How come? Ben would know, of course.

Well, at least you're alive. Thank the Force - or whatever - for that.
I kept imagining an icicle, and you in the middle.
It's not that I haven't seen people dead before
just that usually they aren't friends of mine.

Wait - look, it's getting light out there. They'll be looking for us now.

Hey, Luke, next time we stay up all night,
you bring the booze.

Mary Carson

Yoda's Garden

Judith A. Balcombe

In the events of life
We go from obscurity
to absurdity, from promiscuity
to celibacy,
In our thoughts about God.

Wandering through forests of
tangled ideas, attempting
to find our Path, the
undergrowth of emotions hinders
us and keeps us from the
Sun.

Twigs of doubt snag us as
we struggle to find the Road.

Snakes slither in our minds
remindful of evil tempting us to
follow, to forget the path of
Enlightenment.

Doves coo suddenly and
circling overhead break our
morbid concentration as

Peace and beauty intrude
upon the dark thoughts of the
forest.

A rainbow appears as
questions reassemble to cloud
the mind once more.

Perhaps It's So, that's
all there is, the Why it
matters not.

Lesser Artifacts

Peggy Barilla

illustrated by DianneWickes

When the war came, as most had known it would, it found him in Guatamala, three sheets to the wind. The news, filtering through to what was left of his consciousness, didn't make much of an impression, however; along with the month-old newspapers, the local bush pilot had alost brought a much-forwarded letter, originally postmarked New York. It had been old news before the first Wehrmacht jackboot had goose-stepped its way across the Polish frontier .. and just as inexorable.

He extended a hand for the nearly depleted bottle. Before he could grasp it, another hand entered his field of vision and lifted it beyond his reach. Blinking, he looked up, a puzzled frown crossing his face. "Whassa idea?"

"Think maybe you've had enough there, Jones?"

"Not quite, no." Indiana Jones leaned forward with a grunt and reclaimed the bottle.

The bush pilot, Russo, shrugged philosophically, and with an outstretched foot hook another chair over to the scarred and battered little table. "Suit yourself, buddy. That stuff'll ruin ya, though."

"I'm an archaeologist -- my life is in ruins." He snorted a foolish giggle at his own ironic joke. "What the hell's it to you?"

"We have a deal, remember? You drink yourself to death on that battery acid, or get yourself gutted on the way to your room, and I don't get paid for flying you upcountry. I don't think much of that, you know?" His American big-city twang somehow managed to sound exotic against the background of Spanish and Indian-dialect conversations. "You wouldn't, either, if you had any sense."

"Oh, I don't know .... " Indy began thoughtfully, then trailed off as his bleary gaze was drawn to an immense cockroach making laborious progress up the wall. He had a momentary impulse to pick it off with his whip. Only, he didn't have his whip. Of all the things he had lost during his last 'expedition', it was the only one he had never bothered to replace. He wasn't sure why. There eally wouldn't have been any point to it, he supposed. When a thing was gone, it was gone' it might be found and wondered at by some future stranger, but that was it. You yourself could never have it back the way it was -- not an old bullwhip or a comfortably battered jacket, not a lucky hat, and not .... He shook his head. They'd all been left on the *Bantu Wind*, for Katanga to bestow on some other desperate passenger. Not quite a pink satin negligee, but ... He took a gulp of his drink in memory of that worthy man, staring into the dregs. The hell with it. Besides, if Russ decided to back out of their agreement, he could probably ride that crawling behemoth upcountry. "They'll outlive us all," he observed.

Russo was confused at the apparent nonsequitur. "Who, the Nazis?"

"No, the cockroaches."

He followed Indy's gesture at the wall. This guy had seemed to know what he was doing; he'd obviously been around. But scratch the surface and he turned out to be just as crazy as any of those other tinhorn eggheads who'd come through this village and others like it in their quests for the secrets -- and the treasures -- of the Mayans. Too bad. He was an okay Joe, otherwise ... and he hadn't struck Russo as a boozer or a crackpot, until today. The war news? Or maybe that letter. Yeah, it was really too bad ....

" -- around since the beginning of things," Indy was syaing, his words starting to slur, "and'll prob'ly be in on the finish ... which could be any day now. And they'll be the same's they always were. Ev'lutionary miracle." He turned his eyes from the insect to the impassively-listening pilot. "Man, now," he continued, lip curling in distaste, " now *he's* something else again, right? Thousands of years of building, creating, making something to hand down to another age -- and then he just goes and blows up the whole fuckin' thing! Gonna roll tanks over it now." His eyes had taken on a light Russo didn't like, piercing and yet turned inward. "Another evolutionary miracle there. Over and over again, and he never learns. Only reason we're still here is he populates faster'n he kills off. Mind you -- " he made another sweeping, lecture-hall gesture -- "he'll get around that problem yet. Breeding may be one of humankind's major talents, but it's nothing compared to thier ability to destroy ... and to delude themselves .... " He was silent for a moment, knuckles going white around the glass, then turned on Russo again as if he hadn't paused at all. "So you tell me -- what's more meaningless, huh? Maybe we deserve to be outlived by a bunch of bugs that never left behind any more'n a shadow in an old rock!" His steadily rising voice reached a crescendo of impotent rage, and he hurled the glass at the wall. It shattered with a splash, barely missing the cockroach, which continued its journey undisturbed.

Oh, yeah, this was one beauty of a jag. Sighing in disgust, Russo scraped his chair back and came around the table. "Yeah, man's a real sonofabitch, all right," he agreed, hauling Jones to his feet. "C'mon, professor. Nap time."

Indiana tried to shrug him off, but became aware, through the alcoholic fog, of the attention they were starting to attract, and decided the man had a point. Still mumbling under his breath, he allowed Russo to steer him toward the staircase at the rear of the bar. Partway up the stairs to the second floor (which made the place the tallest structure in the village), he twisted his head around to study Russo's face. "I ever meet you before Tuesday?"

"Why?"

"I dunno. Something .... " He laughed to himself. "In another life, maybe."

The rangy young pilot grinned. "Yeah, maybe that's it. Okay, here we go ... "

The room was stifling, stale air baking behind closed shutters. Russo dumped his burden on the sagging bed and Indiana fought the reflex to hang on as the place spun wildly around him.

"I gotta go see to the plane. We go tomorrow or we don't go, got me? I don't want to be out in the middle of nowhere in the kind of weather that's gonna be coming up soon." Not sure why, he paused at the door. "Look -- it's crazy to try this during the rainy season. Why don't you sit tight and head inland next year?"

"I don't have another year."

Russo grunted at this, looking at the dishevelled scientist. "Right," he said quietly, and was gone.

Indy closed his eyes and the spinning lessened until it felt as if he were being carried along aby some gentle current. It was a very pleasant feeling, really. He felt comfortable, without a worry in the world, all doubt and disappointment cleansed away ...

The sensation of fresh sheets on a real bed was still delightful. Even better was Marion, warm beside him, sharing them. Vagrant sunlight seeped in around the edges of the windowshades, imparting a soft glow to the room, to the mingled cream and tan of her skin, the waves of her black hair. Raven black, for Marion Ravenwood. No -- Marion Jones. A different woman altogether. The thought still left him a little dazed, but no more so than the rest of the immediate past. He'd catch up to it all eventually, and he fancied this would be some catching up he would definitely enjoy ...

He stretched luxuriously, eye catching and automatically noting the glaring inaccuracies of the cheap pseudo-Classical litho over the desk. It was indeed one hell of a world. Only days ago, they were on a wild chase across half the globe, with very little expectation of coming out of it alive. This morning -- was it really this morning? Never mind -- they were in this cosy Washington guesthouse, having a honeymoon on Uncle Sam. The least they could do, Indy thought with a remaining touch of anger, remembering the bitterly cheated look on Brody's face. The least they could do, and not one whit more.

It would have to be an abbreviated honeymoon, in any event -- ludicrous as it seemed in the face of all that had happened, he had to get back to the college. He'd already missed as much of the semester as his less-flexible superiors were likely to stand for, government or no government, and you don't screw around with your tenure, especially with a wife to support. Still he was a very lucky guy. They were both very lucky. And if they only had a little while to enjoy themselves, they shouldn't waste a minute of it.

He bent and kissed her. Eyes -- those wonderful eyes -- opening lanquidly as she laughed, pulling him down into her arms ...

Letting the door slam behind him with instantly-regretted childishness, he looked around his cluttered study and for the first time found no comfort in it. A lot of the pieces overflowing the small room had been moved in from the living room, relegated to the study when Marion had begun imposing her own brand of order on the chaos of his house and his life.

He'd never expected her to go for the faculty-wife routine. But, why not? Her life had been no adventurous expedition, a few months' escape when the confines of Academe became too much. It had been years of hell. Was it really so much of a surprise that she'd want to forget that life? That the security of her current circumstances might be her escape? Maybe the old Marion had been in there all along, he reflected just waiting until it was safe to come out again. And was it any suprise, therefore, that she would want him to be a part of her safe, rebuilt life, too?

Maybe it was. He stared at the wall of books, and saw their rigid backs turned on him in mute ostracism. *// Ostracism//* one part of his mind rattled on, *//from the Latin* ostraca; *discarded objects, usually referring to broken pottery vessels, shards of which are most frequently found among the lesser artifacts of a household, and ... //* In the dancing light of the fire, the African mask now hanging above the mantle

leered mockingly. He'd been relegated to this room too, along with everything else that didn't fit in ...

It wasn't his fault this time, he knew that, no more than it was hers. This time, there was no one to blame. To his astonishment, he had realized quite early on that he really did want to be married to her; that he loved her, jealousy of Belloq and every male in Patan fading with astounding ease as the weeks and month went by. They'd both wanted to be married; they'd both tried, tried for over two years, but had never been able to figure out how. Much as he loved teaching, he couldn't restrict himself to the classroom, not even for Marion, and she had had her fill ten times over of journeying around the most desolate spots on earth in pursuit of an obsession she had never felt. And life in a small college town, no matter what else it might do, could never match the pitch of the wild times, the fever of their rediscovery of one another. It was too much like another staid and respectable house, years ago ...

He heard her movements upstairs, the creak of a floorboard over his head, felt a pang of mingled remorse and desire. Momentarily he debated going up, trying to smooth things over, but rejected the idea. She'd been more impossible to deal with than ever lately, ever since Marcus had been by for dinner a few weeks ago and had, somewhere over the coffee and brandy, broached the subject of a new expedition ... He didn't understand. He'd told her he didn't expect her to come along, that he knew she'd be happier at home in Marshall. And was it his fault that the new term, plus preliminary research for the trip, was leaving him exhausted more often than not?

Sighing explosively, he began to unfold the blanket left at the foot of the study sofa. One more section of Oquendo's translation of the Codex, and he'd turn in ... Turn in what? He'd already turned in damn near everything he had, and for what?

The confusion buzzed in his head. She'd feel differently when he was thousands of miles away in some jungle ... *//Like she felt in Nepal, without you there to sweep her off her feet? //* Fuck it. He knew what he felt like tonight, and it wasn't Oquendo.

Letting the blanket go in mid-flap, to settle in a crumpled heap, he went out into the hall to the phone. "Ellen? Right .. . you know where. Of course I'll square it with your house mother. I did last time, didn't I? After all, you're the best research assistant I've got ... "

He was in a city. Still, silent, smelling powerfully of dust and decay and ancient bone, its streets revealed to a cold sharp moon for the first time in ... how long? Where was he anyway? And what was he doing here along, in the middle of the night?

He moved along the amzingly-preserved mosaic paving the street, his steps purposeful. Somewhere in the back of his mind, he knew where he was going as well as if he'd memorized a grid-map. *//Or maybe from some other life?...//* the thought came unbidding, and it disturbed him, made him feel like a mouse in a maze.

His boots kicked up small clouds of dust, spectres in the bright moonlight. They distracted him, and he looked down at the pattern of the walkway, bleached by night into a stark contrast of black and white, strange twisted corsses stretching away as far as the eye could see ....

He looked up, and found to his astonishment that the street he'd been following had vanished, transformed into an imposing structure of colossal and barbaric dsign. As he watched, fires blazed up in intricately-wrought grates to either side of its cavernous entrance, lending life to the harsh, stylised eagle surmounting it, toying with the statues that carried the bowls of flame, so that at times they seemed to be of a stern and accusing old professor, at others a transfixed madman in strange elaborate robes ....

A tremor of intense excitement went through him. This was the big one. Everything he had worked for, longed for, since he was a student. It was there, and it was all his ...

The treasury's massive doors parted on soundless hinges at his touch and the torch-- where had that come from? -- played its light over an array so dazzling as to catch at a man's mind as well as his breath, to beckon his soul into the dark .... "Carter, eat your heart out!" he exulted, moving into the chamber with reverent hast, his free hand running caressingly over the exquisite objects being revealed to his sight.

A wall loomed up in the torchlight, covered with an inscription in an arcane tongue Indy had never seen before. Fired by an all-devouring need to touch and understand this message, he started across the room toward it. He had only gone a few steps when the heavy grating sound made him turn.

The stone fell smoothly into place, sealing the chamber moments before he could reach it, and no amount of clawing or shoving could move it again. He'd found the big one, and now it had him. But maybe not for good. Maybe there was another way out. There was always a way out of anything, wasn't there?

He picked his way carefully through the now-menacing heaps of antiquities to where the torch lay sputtering on the stones where he'd dropped it. *//Don't go out, just don't go out, not yet ... //* It flickered, hissing, and for a moment seemed to coil ... and was only a torch. But his hand shook as he picked it up.

He lifted the torch which flared even brighter than it had before, lighting the wall and its charply-chiselled inscription. He glanced at it, preoccupied now by a far more urgent matter ... and looked again, his jaw dropping.

left the keys to the house with Marcus..... I hope you find what you're really looking for.....

English. It was English now, and he mouthed the words softly as he read them. He had them all by heart already ... "...simply can't take it anymore ... won't work, no point throwing good years after bad, trying to force it ... leaving the keys to the house with Marcus ... hope you find what you're really looking for .... "

As he finished, dozens of cracks appeared in the wall, spreading and widening, accompanied by a rumble,a moan from the earth's core. The torch guttered and died in a great sourceless wind, and as Indy threw his arms up in a futile gesture to protect himself, the wall crumbled and began to fall ....

Jones awoke with a smothered cry, then lay still in the darkness, fitting reality back together. His heartbeat slowed, the sweat running down his body, talking and laughter from the bar downstairs, a dog barking somewhere ....

He sat up slowly, his head pounding and his mouth feeling like a swamp. He moaned and buried his face in his hands. Russo had certainly been right about that stuff. "You're an educated man," he croaked into his palms. "Think that by this time you'd be able to think of some other way to deal with things. Never fails with that woman ... always end up some damn place getting drunk alone ... "

It wasn't much of a peptalk, but it brought a slow, gudging smile. After a few minutes he rose and went to the window, opening the shutter and leaning out into the air. It was sluggish, damp, but it felt wonderful after suffocating in this room, and he took long deep lungsful of it.

His head clearing a bit, he felt his way over to the kersene lamp that provided the only illumination and lit it. In its yellow glow he checked his watch and saw that it was nearly midnight.

Indy stripped off his sweat-soaked shirt, pouring tepid water out into the basin and washing perfunctorily, splashing it over his face and the back of his neck. Unearthing his other shirt from the pack flung down in the corner, he studied himself in the small cracked mirror over the washstand as he put it on.

Running a hand over his face, raking it through his hard, a man who might have been a hardened old railbird looked back at him. How to reconcile him with the quiet conservative scholar who had begun this expedition? Or had the distance between them been narrowing without his noticing it all these years? "I wonder if Fredric March started this way?"

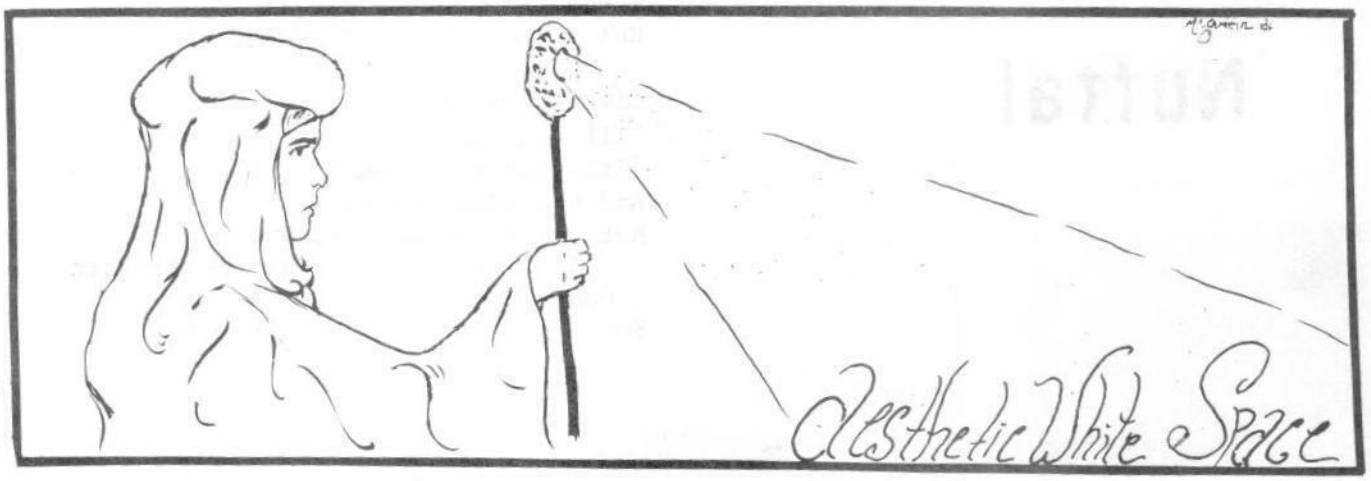
He was nearly forty-two. Not old, but gray was showing in the untouched stubble, and despite such jaunts as these there was a relentless thickening around his middle. The looks that had made him something of a ladykiller -- and begun all his problems -- were hard to discern (or even remember) in the grim weathered face he saw. All that was really left now was the hunger; that had never changed.

The world itself was changing, however, rapidly and forever. By the time it settled again, if and however it might settle, it would be too late for him. A personal concept of time as his would be too much of a luxury for that world. No, he'd been right when he told Russo he didn't have another year.

Marion, though ... She was in New York now, on a quest of her own -- back in the States with some style, as she'd wanted. He'd kept that promise, at least. He'd paid her back that much, even if in a way neither of them might have chosen.

He sighed, smiling, then stirred himself. There was still time enough to find some food, get some real sleep, before double-checking his gear. Most of it was already on the plane anyway, and the bulkier equipment would be waiting for him at the riverhead. All that remianed was to pull his personal kit together and meet Russ, then he'd be on his way. No denying it would be rougher than he'd bargained for, but who could tell? He was a very lucky guy.

They were both very lucky.



A Little Song Composed In A Cantina

by Lindsey Nuttal

I was feelin' fine
The night was young
The moons did shine
Songs were bein' sung
And I began to pine
   And I got drunk and missed it
I can't believe I did it
But I got drunk and missed it

Pretty, she was, in spades
In her broad brimmed hat
With the white cockades
Next to me she sat
And the light on her features played
   But I got drunk and missed it
I can't believe I did it
But I got drunk and missed it

On several planets
Her plaudits rang
They wrote her sonnets
And of her eyes they sang
And of her breasts (two sets!)
   And I got drunk and missed it
I can't believe I did it
But I got drunk and missed it

She offered me some ale
She offered me some wine
She said I looked hale
And soon it was time
Into the night we sailed
   But I got drunk and missed it
I can't believe I did it
But I got drunk and missed it

When I awoke there,
She was by my side
I could only stare
"Oh, I remember," I lied
Her feelings for to spare
   Oh, I got drunk and missed it
I can't believe I did it
But I got drunk and missed it

Now you can drink
'Til you can't see
'Til your gorge sinks
And you steps weave
But *never* go and drink
   'Til you get so drunk you miss it
I don't know how I did it
But I got drunk and missed it!

The Many Faces of Captain Solo

Chris Callahan

It's amazing how much the character of Han Solo has inspired fan writers. Luke Skywalker is ostensibly the hero of STAR WARS, but Han is the dominant character in a large portion of SW-based fanfic published so far, and probably will be in the future, whether the stories are based on SW or THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (all stories considered here being based on SW and its official offshoots only). He's not so well delineated in SW (TESB shows a couple interesting sides of him), but fan writers have taken the flat comic strip character of SW and built him into a real person -- actually many real people, depending on the individual perspective. I suppose one of the most surprising things about fannish protrayals of him is the nearly unanimous agreement on three aspects of him which are not brought out in SW, movie or novel: his sense of honor (idiosyncratic though that is), his deep loyalty to his friends, and his relationships with women. Beyond these, everything about him is open to various interpretations, some of them being better thought out than others.

In this article I've choes to examine ten aspects of Han and his life as covered by fan writers: Corellians in general; Han's background and family; his business/personal ethics; drinking; the *Millennium Falcon* (mainly, how he got it); meeting Chewie; the Force; his relationships with people generally; his relationship to the Alliance; his relationship with Leia. The stories are from my personal fanzine collection; stories only, no poetry, articles, 'gag' items such as stories written strictly as humore. As for the quality of the stories, I've tried to avoid making judgments, though there are a few places where I question some of the ideas presented. And I've used only stories actually published, which means leaving out some of my own, plus a few I've been told about by correspondents and in conversation. Sigh. The individual stories are listed in the bibliography at the end, so if I mention only an author's name in later references to that author's single story discussed here and you forget the title, you can check at the end. Here are the zines, in alphabetical order: AGAINST THE SITH (6-7); FALCON'S FLIGHT (1-5); GALACTIC FLIGHT (1-3); GUARDIAN (2); JEDI JOURNAL (1-2); MOONBEAM (3); MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE (1-3); PEGASUS (3-4); SCUM AND VILLAINY (one shot); SHOWCASE (May 1979); SKYWALKER (1-3); STAR JOURNEYS (one shot); TIME WARP (3); TWIN SUNS (1); WARPED SPACE (31/32-43).

I organized this article by aspect rather than each writer's total perception because some stories included only one or a few aspects, and even when an author included different ideas in different stories, the picture might or might not be consistant. Some people seem to have one particular 'universe' they stay with, while others have more than one, or no particular 'universe' at all (at least as apparent from what's been published). So if the organization seems a bit confused at first, it's not really. And if you find the constand citing of titles a bit of a nuisance, remember I'm a librarian by profession and probably a researcher at heart.

I. Corellians in general

There are only two references to Corellians generally in the novelization of SW and none in the movie. In the book, Ben, after identifying a group in the bar "Corellians -- pirates most likely" explains that in "Corellian terminology the distinction between who owns what cargo tends to get a little muddled from time to time." And on the Death Star, trying to get back to the *Falcon*, Han reminds Chewie that "Corellians can't get lost." On this fragile base, plus the character of Han Solo on screen and their own interpretations of that character, fan writers have built up a sometimes amazingly consistant picture of Corellians (though whether they mean the race in general or spacers in particular isn't always clear).

Several people have played with the idea that Corellians can't get lost. Cynthia and Don Frazer in *The Forming of the Company* and Mark Walton in *Boredom* repeat the novel's statement, while Jackie Paciello in *Resurgence* calls it an instinct to find the shortest possible way. It's possible this ability is a small part of what Han means when he says "Corellians always come back" in Paula Block's *Gratitude*. And in Susan Matthews' *Ghost in Far Sector*, he brags, "'I'm Corellian -- I can find the pinhole in a pilot's chart'." Judi Hendricks, Maggie Nowakowska, and Chris Jeffords have all come up with interestin variations. In Hendricks' *Assault on Logaria* Han explains to Cori that Corellians are such good smugglers because they always come out of hyperspace at the right place, even flying blind -- something to do with magnetic currents (sort of like migrating birds, maybe?). In *Corell Also Exports Pirates* Nowakowska invents the 'directsense', an instinctive ability that develops usually by the age of eight or so. Jeffords calls it 'locationsense' in *Smuggler's Passage*, and adds that "Corellians literally couldn't get lost".

As to the piracy (by the way, when Lando in TESB called Han 'you old pirate' we still don't know if that's literal or figurative), several writers mention piracy as part of Han's background, and occasionally he's referred to as a pirate now (especially by Nowakowska), but these seem to be merely nods in the direction of the book -- the usual emphasis is on Han as pilot and smuggler, the movie image. And while other Corellians are sometimes called pirates most of those so designated are undesirables or worse; most of the emphasis is on smuggling, individuality and disregard for rules made by others. Jeffords, however, in *Smuggler's Passage*,

says that a lot of Corellians spacers are pirates but many of these, including the family friend Han works for after his parents are killed, are not exclusively criminals.

Nowakowska has the most completely diveloped Corellian society -- actually two societies; those that stay on-planet and those that leave, the latter generally being the more complex individuals, rejecting their home but seldom able to break away completely. In *Corell/Pirates,* she introduces the notion of Corellian honor, including keeping one's word (something most writers see as one of Han's outstanding characteristics). And in *Vintage 6080* she has Han state that when a Corellian makes a deal it's a deal. This idea of Corellian honor is a fannish invention -- there's no justification for it in the movie or book. As a race, her Corellians are very clannish, oriented toward family rather than the individual, with an incredibly formalized social setup to enforce that orientation (responsibility -- social acceptance -- is all). Thus it's the real individualists that go to space, where ironically they form an almost equally strict society of Corellian Independents as shown in *Last Flight of the Millennium Falcon* and *Nothing Left to Lose.* On-planet, the women are the designers and engineers of the famous Corellian ships, while the men are householders and family managers. Low fertility, especially among women, has led to polygamy. Maybe as part of their revolt against the planetary society, Independents are obsessed with privacy (*Nothing Left;* and Chris Jeffords apparently agrees about the privacy -- in her *Hail and Farewell* she says "Corellians didn't pry into other Corellians' business".) In *The Reluctant Rebel* (featuring Han's meeting Chewie and his first contact with Willard before the latter joined the Alliance), Nowakowska also states that Corellians (presumably the spacers now) do not like doublecrosses, organizations or rules other than their own; and Willard thinks of them as "the most entertaining crooks in the galaxy". Interesting reputation -- and Han's certainly an entertaining crook by anyone's standards!

Nowakowska's Corellians, family/clan oriented at home and gregarious in space, are basically a friendly people (one of Han's objections is that they use friendship and love to tie you down). Matthews' *Kinmeet* (part of one of her several universes) shows a somewhat similar society without the suffocation. Her Corellians are divided into Families and Houses following certain specialties (e.g., the Fishers of Seath, of whom the Solos are one House, are navigators, pilots and engineers). and while they're aggresively independent *vis-a-vis* the rest of the galaxy, they're very cooperative among themselves. Hospitality is a Corellian virtue, and among family and friends they're very demonstrative.

In contrast to these two, Anne Wilson in *Intruder* says Corellians aren't noted for teamwork, and Pat Munson in *Promotion* claims that self-interest comes first, though if they take any side at all it'll be for the Rebellion (Matthews' family voted against supporting the Empire but won't sommit itself to the Alliance yet, while Nowakowska's planetary group care about neither side and the spacers tend, at least in principle, to side with the rebels). And Ebba Anderson, in *A Teachable Art,* says Corellians are not an open, loving people regardless of individual background.

Corellian independence in brought out in a rather different way by Hendricks in *Stowaway,* when Han says that Corellian women don't sell themselves no matter how good the money is (though a father would sell his child!)

Pat Gonzales in *Marriage Secret* invents marriage bracelets, seldom worn now expect by couples who are proud to announce their committement and willing to put up with ridicule (does she mean that marriage itself is 'out' or simply the public announcement of it? Han, by the way had a set given to him years ago as a joke -- he's kept them for some reason and won't tell Leia if he'd ever actually been engaged).

Nowakowska refers sometimes to a vague code of honor. Lee Lauzon in *Knightsbane* says that Han is held back from using Alliance funds for personal use by an "odd Corellian scruple". Walton's *Boredom* has Han saying, "'On my honor as a Corellian'", while Jeffords in *Jedi's Journey* quotes him as insisting, "'Corellians don't rat'" (she also mentions "a Corellian's laser beam wit", likely extrapolating from Han's proven talent in that area). And Janal Tagar in her *The Corellian Code* states that code specifically: never do anything free if someone's willing to pay for it; always have an escape route; always pay debts, good or bad. Sounds almost like a Corellians version of the three Laws of Robotics! Notice that part of the code is paying one's debts. That's something else the fen seem to agree on, whether for Han personally or Corellians in general.

There's disagreement on the name of Han's home planet. "Corell" leads, as used by Lisa Adolf, Ebba Anderson, Ellen Blair, Pat Gonzales, Christine Jeffords, Susan Matthews, Maggie Nowakowska and Ann Wilson. "Corellia" comes next, for C.A. Bucar, Chris Callahan, Nancy and Tracy Duncan, Jane Firmstone (now Rafferty), Jackie Paciello and Janal Tagar (I know of two othersn, not yet published). "Corelli" is used twice by Matthews also, and "Corel" gets one vote from Michelle Malkin.

II. Family/Background

Han has almost as many backgrounds as writers mentioning the subject, and both the differences and the similarities are fascinating.

Ellen Blair in *Metamorpheus* says he annoys Luke sometimes by dropping hint about his past but never elaborating. In *Winter Music* she states that he never knew his father and didn't know if he'd been orphaned or abandoned by his mother; he'd been raised by several people in succession, named Han by one of them (it's both a formal name and a nickname; there's a tantalizing mention of a baron named Han) and Solo by the spaceport pilots because he was always alone. Both Anderson and Lisa Adolf in her *Little One* give him a street childhood with no memory of a family, while Firmstone in *A Matter of Conscience* says he knows from experience that street kids grow up fast, even though he knew his mother and her rich family that looked down on her and her spacer's bastard -- he still knows where an uncle lives, in fact, and originally plans to take Tai there.

Most stories mentioning his early life give him some sort of a family, though, with varying details. In Tagar's *Corellian Code* the young woman tells Han she owes him a debt because his father saved her life and since she can't repay the father she has to pay the son. She seems no older than Han, probably younger, so his father must have been around fairly recently. And in Melinda Holly and Donna Perry's *Renegade*, the madam Lyl knew Han's father. Han says his father knew a lot of women; whether this is hearsay or if the man was around as Han grew up isn't clear, but it's likely he was around a while at least because Han and Lyl seem to be old friends, and Lyl isn't young. Tracy Duncan's *The Emperor's Nephew* mentions a picture of his mother among Han's few treasures. In Matthews' *Excerpts from a Corellian Diary*, chapter two, he knows what to do for Jennet because "his momma didn't raise no fools" (in two other stories she gives more on his family, but they aren't necessarily in the same universe); in Liza Gregory's *Triumphant Defeat* he tells someone to blame his mother for his greed, she spoiled him (what! he's not mercenary by nature?). Gonzales quotes him as identifying Leia to the hospital as Marta, short for Martaria -- he tells Leia that was his mother's name, and she'd be proud to know a princess had borrowed it. In my own *Rescue Operation* the viewpoint is rather different -- the story is about his mother, Maeve Solo, pilot and smuggler, and Han is mentioned briefly as her son.

Several stories refer to his family rather than to one or other of his parents. Ann Elizabeth Zeek in *The Cincinnatus Caper* thinks he knows the *Falcon* better than "the faces of his own family", which seems to imply that he has living relatives. In *A Marketable Commodity* by Block and Hendricks he refers to his clan. And Wilson gives him Jedi parents who died when he was small; he was raised by relative who knew nothing of his inherited ability to use the Force. Michelle Malkin's *Long, Long Way from Home* gives more detail; he'd worked as a smuggler with his father's ex-captain as a teenager (his parents having been killed in a speeder accident and his mother's family having taken in Han and his brother Dav). He joined the Academy to become a pilot, was courtmartialed for reporting official corruption, and apparently the relatives turned Dav against him because of the 'disgrace' -- he hasn't heard from Dav in eleven years. And though the ex-captain was a part time pirate, Han denies emphatically that he and his father were ever pirates. In my *Work of Art*, set when he's ten (he doesn't appear personally) I mention a twin sister, Val, and the maternal grandmother who looks after the kids when Maeve is working; Maeve takes with with her sometimes, but so far only on legal runs.

Kelly Hill in three stories shows a loner who's been in space since childhood. In *Superstition Run* he's a skilled pilot and smuggler at 21; in *Free Enterprise* at 21 or 22 he's already been in space ten years, his older brother (the only family he ever knew) having died when Han was 12; *Wandering Star* again mentions the brother and the fact that till he joined the Alliance Han had no place to call home and liked it that way. On the other hand, Paciello (*Resurgence*) has a friend of his mention "'the gang back home'", indicating that he's kept some connection with Corellia.

Matthews, Nowakowska and Jeffords so far have the most detailed backgrounds (published, that is). Matthews' *Kinmeet & Don't Believe it for a Minute* (representing two of her several SW universes) agree to some extent on Han's family. In both he's the bastard son of a Corellian mother and offworld father, with an older brother, and after his mother's death is raised by relatives, his father being long out of the picture. In *Believe* the brother (by a different father, presumably Corellian) and mother died in space when Han was twelve; *Kinmeet* doesn't say whether the brother was full or half, or how he and the mother died. The mother in *Believe* cut off the father when she got pregnant because she wanted to raise the child as completely Corellian; the father went off to marry his sweetheart on Tatooine, becoming Luke's father, making Han and Luke half-brothers. Han, after his mother's death, was raised by his brother's family, which is why I assume the other man was Corellian. *Kinmeet's* Han apparently never knew his father either. His mother, a Solo of the Fisher Family, was apparently a pilot with her own house and docking bay, which Han inherited, and it's her family, a cousin and the cousin's husband, who take in Han and his older brother after her death. This "aunt" and "uncle" are really parents to Han and he obviously loves and respects them very much, even though he's a bit nervous about coming back for the party, knowing the family disapproves of some of his activities.

The family of Nowakowska's Han as shown in *Corell/Pirates* couldn't be more different, beyond the extended-family idea. Always a loner, Han finds the smothering love of the closed society too much to deal with, even though he genuinely loves his family, and at fourteen he decides to leave once and for all, ending up on the *Zero Hold*. His mother, Hlo TLev, one of the best engineers on Corell, is also a rebel in her own way, but has found ways to get along within the society, maintaining her independence (to the occasional chagrin of her husband) while holding onto the benefits of the group at the same time. When Han is derelict in his duty to younger siblings, she's more angry at him for not arranging things better than for what he actually did or didn't do--Han seems to have a lot of Hlo in him besides his talent for engineering! The red stripes on his pants are here explained as being the color of the ALev clan, and he starts wearing the style when he first runs away, as a means of advertising his background while at the same time denying it verbally (Matthews' says in *Excerpts* ch. 3 that it's for a trainer of fighter pilots--they still use his texts and in a later chapter says he was thrown out for falling in love with an Imperial woman, Jennet ap Rhiannon).

Jeffords *Smuggler's Passage*, says his father, a former pilot, later ran a shipyard and died in an explosion there when Han was twelve; his mother (who either hadn't married his father or kept her own name) was a computertech, killed in an electrical fire in her own shop three years later. Han then joined the piratical family friend as a crew member, and his original first mate was a colleague on that ship.

Three people include piracy and slavery in his background. In Blair's *Winter Music* he's a navigator on an Imperial freighter (only mention I've seen so far of his working on an Imperial civilian ship as opposed to an Independent) at twenty-two when he's captured by pirates and sold as a slave, being bought by Yonara. Accoriding to Adolf, by the time he crashes on Chewie's planet he's already been part of a pirate crew and then a smuggler, which he considers a step up. Nowakowska often refers to him as a pirate and says he once worked for a Sith pirate who sold him as a slave, though whether on Pekin, where he learned the Wookiee language *(Reluctant Rebel)* or on Kessel where he was branded (*Nothing Left*) isn't clear. The Sith connection is also mentioned in *Last Flight*. (As to his understanding Wookiee--most people assume it's a natural aptitude for languages; Jeffords in *Smuggler's Passage* says he has a universal translator implanted, as does Chewie.

III. Ethics

Han's business and personal ethics as shown in the movie and book are apparently non-existant, but fan writers agree on at least three things: he's loyal to friends, pays his debts, and with one notable exception, keeps his word. In several stories there's mention of this last being part of his personal value system, but Blair's *Intersection* turns on his deliberate breaking of a promise--to Chewie and Luke yet! What's more, the promise concerns diverting for personal use part of a cargo already spoken for in order to make a fast fortune, which goes against his usual fannish image of holding to contracts--it's a perfect illustration of Ben's commentabout Corellian terminology concerning ownership of cargoes. At the end he redeems himself, of course. In sharp contrast there's Hendricks' *Tega Run*, showing him adhering to a deal made by his *partner* even though he personally doesn't like the deal at all.

There's no disagreement about his loyalty to friends, even when this gets him in deep trouble with the Empire because he won't betray the Alliance (which includes some of his friends) and his insistence on paying his debts, honorable and otherwise (though Frazer's reference to his "'compulsive paying of debts'" giving him a reputation for honesty--at which he gags--sounds as if they think he might have a reputation for ignoring such petty annoyances when it suits him.). THE debt, of course, is to Jabba and despite the implication in TESB that he's willing to let that slide til he's scared by bounty hunters, fen think he'd pay it as quickly as possible because of his own values rather than simple fear.

There are several different views of his honesty, the mentions of which don't specify personal or business. Negative views appear in Hill's *Free Enterprise*, in which he considers honesty only less vile than celibacy, and Zeek's *Cincinnatus Caper* in which he says never deal with an honest man--they can't be bribed. And in Tracy and Nancy Duncan's *At the Rebel Base* he swipes a machine part from Alliance stores for his own use. On the positive side is his statement (according to Walton and Jeffords) that the rebels are rebels because they're honorable and the view expressed by another character in *Nothing Left* that Han never learned to use sincerity as a ploy--when he's honest, he's honest, period.

In *The Talia Stone* Gonzales quotes Han as saying that his business has certain standards, he has some of his own, and he left a former colleague, Brock, because Brock had none. And Jeffords *(Hail & Farewell)* has him telling Bobba Fett that Fett isn't fit to associate *in*decent people, though whether because of the murders or on general principles isn't stated. The Han of *Reluctant Rebel* will do just about anything that earns money except carry clone chemicals, and he's ready to kill someone who uses his ship to carry them (a deliberate frame, which fails). At the end of *Tega Run* when he dumps the cargo that got his partner killed he takes the extra time needed to empty the powder from its packets so it won't be picked up as salvage by some unsuspecting future victum. And in *Cincinnatus Caper* he quiets his conscience about carrying war supplies, addictives and slaves for Jabba, things he wouldn't touch on his own, considering it "just a job", looking forward to being independent again so he can choose his cargoes. Then there's Karen Klinck's *Pay Off*, which suggests that being part of the Alliance in *any* way appeals to his "notion of honor".

Of course, there're lots of underhanded things he's perfectly willing to do. For example, in Hendricks' *Stowaway*, as part of his payment for Cori's contract he includes some gems which will shatter the first time Gerbashe plays some particularly revolting music (Han expects to be far away by then!). And in Hill's *Free Enterprise*, after getting the *Falcon* from Jabba he secretly adds smuggling compartments to carry an extra load of spice for which he gets more than he makes for Jabba--enough to go into business for himself.

There are a number of references to his sexual ethics or lack thereof (he does draw the line at rape) but only a few to children. In *Nothing Left* Nowakowska says he avoids fertileCorelli women so as not to risk fathering children he'd feel responsible for. This puts him in a good light as recognizing the responsibility of fatherhood (part of his cultural background, no doubt) but makes one wonder if the Corelli on their various planets are so obsessed with their low fertility level that contraception (by either partner) is either unknown of considered out of the question even by spacers who've been rejected by the society otherwise. In Matthews' *Corellian Wake*, in which Han is killed at forty-eight, he has a son about ten by a woman with whom he apparently had a fairly stable relationship. Wilson's Han has apparently been as casula about contraception as about his liaisons (it's not likely that contraception is nonexistant) because Vader had found at least five children Han didn't know about--with the implication there there are others. Han's delighted at the idea of being a father, brags that of course his daughter's pretty--she's his, after all--but he seems to have no interest in taking responsibility beyond determining that no child of his will work for the Empire if he can help it.

IV. Drinking

Maybe it's the space opera image of the drunken spaceman, but a lot of fan writers seem to think Han would be a heavy drinker. Then there're a couple who present, with considerable logic, the thesis that he doesn't indulge much at all. In the movie, though he meets Luke and Ben in a bar and has a glass in his hand when the investigating troopers come by, he never takes a drink onscreen. In the novel, however, he has an impressively large mug in front of him and takes a good slug of its contents before starting negotiations; later, while running through the Death Star with Chewie, he excuses getting lost on one occasion by his inebriation at the time. Obviously, if he spends time in a bar, he's not likely to be a teetotaller, but this fact and possibly the two passages in the book form a rather small base on which to build some of the fannish portrayals.

The two stories (of over twenty mentioning drinking) in which the authors show him as careful are Roberta Rogow's *What Good's a Reward?* and Zeek and Barbara Wenk's *Catch Fire, Draw Flame*. Rogow says he doesn't drink much because it can be dangerous on the job and harm a pilot's reputation, and he prefers to keep a clear head. Zeek and Wenk have a slightly different perspective--he seldom drinks because he can't afford the effects of drunkenness, but when his emotions, especially repressed ones, come to the surface and he can't do anything about the situation, he'll drink as much as necessary to burn out the emotional reaction. Interesting view of his personality there. Matthews in *Devil and Deep Space* is sort of in the middle saying he doesn't make a habit of overindulging, but when meeting Chewie's friends for the last time he gets careless and drinks so much he falls asleep.

Most of the writers, though, see him as putting away a considerable amount of alchol, for whatever reasons, and sometimes with interesting results. In *Wandering Star*, for example, he's easily maneuvered (by Luke) into a deal while half drunk, something he later admits he should have been more careful about--apparently it's happened before and he didn't like the consequences! In two of Hill's earlier stories drinking is important--in fact it saves his life in *Superstition Run* because he's so hungover the next day he can't even think about fixing some faulty wiring. His partner does it instead and gets electrocuted. And in *Free Enterprise* Han and Chewie seal their new partnership with a drinking bout and shared hangovers.

Drinking is an important plot element in Paciello's *Resurgence* also. Smashed but ambulatory, Han and a friend plan a joke on a third, but it never comes off because Han sees Vader, supposedly dead, in the bay planned for the joke and sobers instantly. In two rather humorous pieces (Walton's *Boredom* and Klinck's *After the Battle*) he gets throughly drunk and hatches plans for practical jokes on Leia. Firmstone has him making a deal while drunk in *Birds of a Feather*, but this time he has the better end of it and plans to be far away when Sheen finds out what she's agreed to. A safer deal is the one he makes with Chewie in Cynthia Frazer's *The Odd Couple*--immersing his sorrows after his partner walks out, Han gets into a fight, is saved by Chewie from certain demolition, and after they pay a fine rather than go to jail, they decide to join forces permanently and drink on it.

Nowakowska in *Tale of Two Lukes* says that Han amazes the rebels by managing to stay roaring drunk for ten days at a time (the Whills would drive anybody to drink!) and in *Last Flight* mentions his reputation amoung Independants for throwing excellent parties, which of course, include a lot of imbibing by the host.

Blair twice had him drinking heavily to drown feelings of grief and guilt. In *Metamorpheus* it's all an illusion imposed by Vader (which wouldn't be so real if it didn't fit his basic personality) but in *Intersection* the feelings are throughly justified and the drinking is real. In Gonzales' *Marriage Secret*, on the other hand, he's drinking simply from boredom and in my *Rescue Operation* Maeve says they sometimes end up in the same bar.

Blair and Lauzon are the only ones to present hangover remedies. Lauzon says he drinks beer, presumably to recover from a bout with the harder stuff, while at the beginning of *Metamorpheus* he offers Luke an apparently evil concoction that works quickly, throughly and with no unpleasant side effects. Blair would be canonized while still alive if she could come up with something like that in real life!

V. The Falcon

At one point in the novel (nowhere in the movie) the *Millennium Falcon* is called a Corellian freighter. Except for Nowakowska, who in *Reluctant Rebel* calls it a "mantor" ship, with seats not quite designed for humans, fan writers accept as given that the ship is Corellian. By the way, Nowakowska says he got the ship when he was nineteen, but not how or whether it was new or used.

Most writers agree that he got the *Falcon* used, anticipating the TESB revelation that he won it from Lando Calrissian--and Jeffords actually states in *Smuggler's Passage* that he won it gambling! The previous owner in her version, however, apparently disputed Han's title and wound up dead. Again, there's one dissenter, Pat Carpenter this time, who in *The Chosen* claims that Han designed the ship. Firmstone might be another dissenter, but she doesn't say (in *Birds of a Feather*) whether Han thinks it's one of a kind because he designed it, or possibly ordered it as a custom model.

Most of the stories that mention his getting the ship show it as a "piece of junk" that Han renovated and modified. For example, in Hill's *Free Enterprise* he's downright suspicious when Jabba offers it to him, because it's such an absolute wreck, but he makes it spaceworthy and then some. Adolf says he got it as junk and it's still not finished when he goes back to Chewie with the partnership offer. As in the previous two, he's about twenty-two in Blair's *Winter Music* when he renovates, modifies and races the old

but salvageable ship to win his freedom. He claims the modification for speed as his own invention. Frazer says he got the ship with his partner (now gone after three years) but doesn't say whether the ship was new or used at the time. In another reference to his famous 'special modifications' Hendricks in *Tega Run* shows Chewie, apparently familiar with this type of ship, being annoyed at the extent to which at least the cockpit has been changed.

As for Han's disbelief when Luke and Ben don't recognize the name, Zeeks asserts that the *Falcon* is known to honest and dishonest alike as the fastest, cheapest guaranteed delivery available.

Concerning the notorious smuggling holds, Hope Inglewright in *Brothers All* comes up with the highly unlikely notion that the ship has space Han doesn't know about, part of which Luke is secretly converting into smuggling compartments as a surprise.

We don't see much of the living quarters in the movie, but there are such signs of sloppy housekeeping as the bowl on the computer console and the cup and bowl with spoon on the ledge behind the couch. Anderson picks up on this, representing the *Falcon* as basically messy except for Chewie's cabin (a lot of writers show Chewie as very fastidious, whether Han is or not). Han, in fact, keeps a favorite mug handy by his bunk and is miffed to find that Luke and Leia, during a cleaning spree, have removed it. Paciello (*Resurgence*) describes Han's cabin as tiny, and if the mention of a towel draped over a box is any indication, she sees him as at least an indifferent housekeeper. Nowakowska, on the other hand, says (in *Corell/Pirates*)that Han decides during his first few hours on the *Zera Hold* that no ship of his will be allowed to get dirty and smelly, and in *Last Flight* pictures his cabin (two smaller ones put together) as crammed full of computer equipment but apparently a model of clean, organized chaos.

VI. Meeting Chewie

By far the most original story on this theme is Adolf's *Little One*. The title is Chewie's personal name for Han, who at twenty or so crashes near Chewie's home and is helped and hidden from Imperial agents by the Wookiees. During his convalescence they become very close, and Chewie secretly draws up an adoption declaration. Han finally leaves, but returns with the *Falcon* to offer Chewie a full partnership.

I've already mentioned Frazer's version of their meeting, in a fight. Hill varies that slightly by having Chewie charging out of a bar and knocking Han flat. Argument leads to agreement, since both need partners, and they go on the usual drunk, in *Free Enterprise*. Hendricks' *Tega Run* has another variation, with Chewie being pursued by three others, knocking Han over, and Han helping to remove the attackers so he can take Chewie himself. Then he find out the Wookiee has barely escaped from religious fanatics who'd already killed his captain, and the two cooperate to try (unsuccessfully) to save Han's partner from the same fate. At the end Han offers Chewie a job.

Nowakowska's *Reluctant Rebel* has a somewhat quieter meeting. Willard, not wanting to be followed, stuns Han and leaves him in the *Falcon's* hatchway. Chewie comes by to check out the ad for a co-pilot's berth and finds him. Jefford's *Smuggler's Passage* is a quiet variation on the bar meeting: Han, in need of a charter, sees Chewie in need of help, takes him on as a passenger, later gets thoroughly involved in Chewie's mission of money retrieval and revenge, with mutual life-saving, and ends up offering a full partnership.

Malkin goes into Han's past with the idea that Chewie had been working for Han's father's ex-captain and was thus one of Han's crewmates years ago, but says nothing about the forming of the current partnership.

VIII. The Force

Han in the movie and novel makes it perfectly clear what he thinks of the Force: "a lot of simple tricks and nonsense" and "there's no mystical energy field controls MY destiny!" Ben smiles patiently. With this background, several writers simply mention his lack of belief, several think he'd eventually come to believe, and a suprising number have decided that in one way or another Han the skeptic is actively involved with the Force.

Gregory and Holley and Perry show him openly skeptical, though by the end of Gregory's *Triumphant Defeat* he admits that it may exist. In Lee Burwasser's *The Challenge* he's thoroughly sick of it; Eva M.E. Oslo and Finocchio Fen have him deciding that Luke must be pulling one of his 'magic tricks' in *The Duel*; Carol Mularski's *Renaissance* has him drunkenly asking Luke if he can become a Jedi and what does believing in the Force have to do with it, anyway?

Lauzon , Hendricks (*Logaria*), Sidwell *(Mission: Power Failure)*, and Walton and Jeffords *(Hamlor)* all show him starting to accept the possibility of the Force for various reasons. In Blair's *Sky Warriors* he tries psychic bribery, promising to believe if he and Eawah complete their mission safely, and wondering guiltily at the end if his lack of belief had been responsible for Eawah's death. Nancy Duncan *(Solo's Quest)* and Inglewright go a bit further, with Han being influenced by the Force in finding someone, while in Gonzales' *Marraige Secret* and Matthews' *Far Sector* he wonders, with no evidence one way or the other, if the Force had influenced him in finding Leia and Ama, both in serious trouble.

Then there are the stories in which he's personally in tune with the Force somehow. whether this means the ability to use it when necessary or, contrary to his emphatic statemtn, it does control his destiny to some extent. JoLynn Horvath *(Jedi Spirit)*, Peggy Barilla *(Touche)*, and the Frazers present variations on the theme of his unsuspected ability to use the Force, much to his consternation -- though in the Frazers' *Company* he able to accept the idea and is interested in discussing it with a former Jedi. Along the same lines is Jeffords' *Jedi's Journey* in which he doesn't think he believes in that mumbo-jumbo, but does know another race's mental technique for blocking pain, and by the end he's willing to admit there might be something to the Jedi after all.

Tagar, Anderson, Wilson and Nowakowska [illegible] son's is the simplest, with Nahua detecting the Force in him and taching him how to use it to survive the hyperspace jump while partially paralysed. Tagar says that Vader notices his influence, possibly the source of Han's ability to resist a mindprobe -- Han of course doesn't know anything about it. Wilson says Han's parents were Jedi, hence he has a latent talent, and Han and Chewie have a strong Force bond, crucial to the plot. Nowakowska thinks he's so much a part of the Force that he doesn't realize it and apparently lacks the ability to use it consciously, but his whole life and personality have been influenced by it -- Bethen especially (in *Nothing Left*) is impressed by the strength in him. This influence explains Ben's smile -- the reaction of an adult to an impatient child.

These differences are fascinating --how did so many writers come to see Han as influenced directly by the Force? And what will they do with Yoda's statement that Luke isn't the only hope, that there's another? Personally I think it's someone else and may use my theory in a story eventually. But I can foresee a lot of stories featuring Han as 'the other'.

VIII. Relationships -- General

In SW Leia wonders aloud if Han cares about anything -- or anybody. He certainly appeared to care about anything but money, his own skin and his ship up until then (with brief concern for Chewie and Luke) and his expression at her doubt could be hurt that she has such a low opinion of him or pain at knowing she has him figured out. Fan writers' answers to the question vary somewhat, but there's a narrower margin of opinion than on, say, the subject of Han and the Force.

Hall in *Business as Usual* points out that he seldom lets himself care because it doesn't pay -- rather similar to Nowakowska's portrayal in *Reluctant Rebel*, as willing to do almost anything for money as long as he doesn't have to get involved personally. Anderson and Hill (*Wandering Star*) both say he never cared for anyone but Chewie , though Hill in *Superstition Run* shows him as close enough to his partner to feel grief at the other's death. Blair *(Sky Warriors)* says that his immediate and complete trust in Eawah is most unusual (in *The Seed* later she explains why he reacted that way) and in *Winter Music* she has Han declare that he doesn't need or love anybody -- love puts chains on both, and he doesn't want to be chained. But he does fall in love inspite of himself, and he is devastated by Yonara's death. Klinck in *Pay-Off* says he can't accept the friendly concern of the rebels as genuine: "in his life you didn't trust anyone!"

The idea of love as chains runs through Nowakowska's stories also. In *Corell/Pirates* Han as a teenager loves his family but feels stifled by them, while in *Last Flight* he's show as always running away from relationships that threaten to get too close, a theme carried through in *Nothing Left* , in which he says he makes no claims on anyone and no one makes claims on him. He also states several times (including to Luke) that true friends don't tie you down or hold you -- and it takes a while for him to realize he's trying to do just that to Bethen. However, he does have a wide circle of close friends and acquaintances on whom he's psychologically dependent despite his loud protestations to the contrary.

In Paciello's *Resurgence* he has a number of close friends outside the Alliance, people whom he trusts to a considerable degree. Jeffords (*Hail and Farewell)* shows him as being a close friend of the Corellian family on Kashyyyk as well as of Chewie's family. Matthews in *Far Sector* says he has a great deal of affection and respect for his friend's mother, Ama Apeele, and is very concerned when she desappears; while in *Excerpts* he's in love with ap Rhiannon, and in *Kinmeet* he cares very much for his family and for Luke and Leia.

Firmstone in *A Matter of Conscience* shows a different side of him as he gets involved with a street kid he's hired as an interpreter, not only showing considerable respect for the girl's feelings, but developing a strong sense of responsibility for her, eventually taking her back to the rebel base.

IX. Relationship with the Alliance

Han in the movie and book has no interest in politics, just money, and is anxious to get away from these lunatics, though he comes back at the last minute to help, and stays around at least long enough to get a medal (he does look rather embarrassed at his entrance, though -- was it pure egotism that made him stay, or did Luke and Leia do some fast talking?). And there's no indication that he plans to stick around afterward. The fannish opinion seems lopsidedly divided on his willingness or lack thereof to stay involved (TESB siding with the majority who favored him staying). Some of those who see him as initially rejecting the Alliance have him coming back for whatever reason, a few show him not exactly rejecting but going on his way with occasional trips back, and a large number show him as very much a part of the Alliance, probably having stayed after the ceremony.

Sidwell in *Special Delivery* implies that he intends to stay away, as he takes the money owed him, plus a special fund for weapons, sneaks back into the base to deliver an arms cargo bought with the funds and sneaks out again, while Gregory says he's not about to join the rebels. C.A. Bucar thinks he'd be willing to stay only long enough to help set up a new base (*And After, What Then?)*; and in Bev Clark's *Nightwatch* he's not about to be blackmailed into joining -- he wants to be able to come and go as he pleases. Blair *(Starquest: Overture)* show him as embarrassed about the medal ceremony but willing to help if he can, on his own terms; in the end he agrees to act as Luke's bodyguard on Luke's search for other Jedi. Paciello and Block in *Continuator* have him blaming Leia, and by extention the Alliance, for Luke's illness, and being ready to leave as soon as he recovers from the knifing (which happened in *Resurgence*, when he agreed to do one job for the rebels before leaving, and ended up being moved to the new base with them.)

Hall covers all bases. Han considers blowing up the Death Star "just a job" and wants out to pay off Jabba and get back to his own business. But when Jabba doublecrosses him to hand him over to the Empire for even more money than Han owed, Han decides he can't let the kids down and does a complete about-face, even telling the doctor who treats him that he and Chewie are with the Alliance, and recruits the doctor as well.

There are three stories in which Han decides after a while to leave but gives Chewie the option of joining him or staying. In Duncan's *Solo's Quest* Chewie's goes with him reluctantly, and after the Wookiee is killed, then resurrected by their young passenger, who has a strange gift for healing, Han decides to go back to the rebels, if only because he thinks Luke needs his help. In Nowakowska's *Nothing Left*, Han, after two years of steady association, leaves with the new ship, *Falcon's Mate*, as 'payment' for the lost *Millennium Falcon*, and Chewie stays behind. In this case it's partly the Imperial murder of several of his friends (actually only one was killed, but he thinks others were also) and his need for the security and friendship of the last two years that gets him back. Zeek and Wenk show Han leaving, Chewie staying, and Han teaming up with a new partner -- in a bar, of course!

Then there's Matthews' rather different view, in *Corellian Wake*, telling of Han's death and funeral at forty-eight, having left his Alliance commision several years before to take up his old smuggling life with Chewie. And in Ronnie Sacksteder's *No Time for Our Sorrows* he's apparently left after the ceremony but comes back ostensibly becuase he heard they were leaving and he wanted to check on salvage possibilities; actually he's been contacted by the intelligence chief, and comes and goes in a way that drives Leia up the walls until he ferries in a load of refugees -- including her fiance. Hendricks in both *Logaria* and *A Marketable Commodity* (with Block) has Han working on his own but available to the Alliance if the price is right -- and if it isn't, he'll probably help anyway because it's Luke and/or Leia who ask him.

A large number of stories present him as very much a part of the Alliance and likely to stay that way. *Last Flight* and *Nothing Left* fall into this catagory also. Of course there are varying degrees of involvement, and reasons for it. Matthews' *Far Sector* has him very much involved because of his own convictions (not detailed) and because it helps pay his considerable bills, and in Malkin's *Long/Home* he and Chewie have been risking their lives over and over for an unstated length of time. In Firmstone's *Matter of Conscience* and Hill's *Wandering Star* he considers the Alliance home, while in Walton's *Boredom* he calls it the only safe place to be while the Imperials are looking for him, and in Klinck's *Pay Off* he wants to work for the Alliance but at first feels he deosn't belong. In Walton and Jeffords' *Hamlor* he's interested enough to consider an informer his enemy as well as the Alliance's, and though he resents getting stuck in a last-ditch stand at Yavin (he has to stay if he wants to get paid!) once in battle he's all business. And in Jeffords' *Jedi Journey* , in which he's doing a bit of spying and message-carrying, he realizes, while resisting questioning under torture, that he helps them because some of the people involved -- even Leia! -- have become his friends. Friendship within the Alliance is part of the plot of Blair's *Metamorpheus* and *Intersection* -- in the latter especially when Han personally confesses his guild to Leia and the council to keep the Alliance from being hurt by his stupidity and greed, while in the former his friendship with Luke and Leia is vital to Vader's making the illusion work. Also, in her *Sky Warriors* he seems to have accepted a place with the rebels as friends, even though he doesn't want to get involved with stopping Vader. Blair's stories, by the way, don't seem to be part of a series, like Nowakowska's Thousandworld Chronicles, Walton and Jeffords' Galactic Cycle, and Matthews' several different universes (which overlap sometimes, making for confusion and fun, and she also gets into the Galactic Cycle occasionally). And at the end of my *Rescue Operation*, Dodonna mentions that Han's away just now, implying that he's doing a regular job for the rebellion.

Paciello and Gleason have very different version of Han's coming back to the Death Star battle. In *No Reward ...* by Paciello, it's the common idea that he felt guilty about running out on them, and his return was impulsive, aided by Chewie's turning on the radio so he heard the action, including Luke's statement about what was happening. Gleason, on the other hand, in *I Know What I'm Doing*, thinks he planned all along to come back, but doesn't explain why he left in the first place. Maybe because he didn't want to contend with someone else giving him orders? Mularski and Rogow both show him immediatly after the end of the movie, celebrating with the other pilots in *Renaissance* and feeling guilty at the Alliance practically bankrupting itself to pay for his help in *No Reward*. None of these stories show any indication of whether he plans to stay, however.

Some show Han as recruiter: Lauzon's *Knightsbane* (though Bryn is killed before they get anywhere); Hall's *Business as Usual* (he recruits the doctor); Matthews' *Widowmaker* (he talks the Hunter of the title into joining); Firmstone's *Birds* (je gets Sheen to do a job for the rebels and halfway gets her to joing, which will mean a recruiting fee for him); and Hill's *Heads I Win ...* (he recruits an old acquaintance he runs into while on a secret mission with Luke).

X. Relationship with Leia

Now that TESB has *apparently* settled the triangle in Han's favor (there's just enough ambiguity, especially on his part, to allow for more speculation) it's interesting to look at the various fan images of Han's relationship with Leia based on SW alone. Considering the hostility in the movie and book it's not at all surprising that a number of writers pair Leia with Luke -- personally, I think she'd choose Luke, too, partly because it would be in the fairytale tradition and partly because I couldn't see Han and Leia getting along on any but an armed-truce basis, being too much alike. The character development in TESB makes a Han/Leia relationship more plausible, and when you think about it they really are better suited to each other than Luke and Leia -- at least they have the same sense of humor! Leaving aside such problems as social status and background, maybe they'd get along after all. I'm looking forward to seeing what happens in REVENGE OF THE JEDI!

In many of the stories here, the authors think Leia would choose Luke, and that Han, in spite of his teasing Luke on the *Falcon*, and his eyeing Leia during the medal ceremony, would be supportive of that relationship. It starts immediately after the ceremony in Mularski's *Renaissance*, when Han turns down an invitation to dinner with Leia to go celebrate with the other pilots, apparently deliverately leaving the field open for Luke.

In both Cynthia Gandy's *The Wedding Challenge* and Bev Clark's *Nightwatch* he's glad Leia is Luke's problem, not his -- he couldn't handle her, though he seems to at least like her. And in Hill's *Wandering Star* he seems to accept the younger people's relationship, while in Tracy Duncan's *The Emperor's Nephew* he feels he has to rescue Luke as much for Leia's sake as because of his friendship for Luke, and he buys a very expensive wedding gift for them. In Dyane Kirkland's *Emme's Diary, part 2*, he supports Luke's feelings for Leia and decides he personally will never understand the princess, while in Nowakowska's *Last Flight* he's very fond of her and sees the youngsters as a couple, and in *Nothing Left*, regrets missing their formal bonding. Matthews (*Kinmeet*) has him announcing publicly that Luke and Leia are engaged -- first time they'd heard of it! Earlier, he'd wondered privately if Luke would allow him visiting rights. In *Excerpts*, part one, in another line, Leia friendship brings out similar feelings in Han for the first time, and in part three, it's pointed out that Leia had been a catalyst in destroying the mindblinding inflicted on Han years earlier. Nancy Duncan goes furthest in *What Every Woman Should Have* , with Han, a practical joker, throwing Luke into a crate and delivering him, plus a fancy dinner, To Leia as an anonymous birthday gift. In Blair's *The Seed* he assures Leia that Luke will keep her from missing him, and Klinck's *After the Battle* has him drunkenly objecting to Leia's negligence of Luke.

Several stories continue the rather ambiguous relationship of SW, mixing occasional hostility, lots of sarcasm, and a large amount of careing, whether expressed openly or not. In Sidwell's *Surprise Attack*, for example, Han, off on his own business, comes back because he missed Luke and Leia and is hurt when Luke accuses him of not caring about Leia because he doesn't want to rush a rescue mission. In her *Mission: Power Failure* (pt.1) he tells Leia that he didn't used to care about anyone else's opinion, but she and Luke are getting to him, and he's hurt when she asks him if it's money that brought this change of heart -- is he hurt because her opinion of him is so low, or because she knows him so well in spite of him? Blair's *Metamorpheus* shows him as sarcastic about Leia but anxious for her to escape Vader with the others and grief-stricken at her apparent death (along with Luke and Chewie); and in *Sky Warriors* he worries about her apprently serious illness. Hall *(Business as Usual)*, Paciello *(Resurgence)* and Jeffords *(Jedi's Journey)* say that Leia is one of the people he cannot betray or allow to fall into Vader's hands, while Anderson thinks that while he considers her "too small and pretty to hit" no matter how angry he is, later he regrets failing her by not completing his mission, and looks forward to seeing her again was well as Luke. He's willing to try an almost impossible theft in Holley's *Talia Stone* to save her, and in Malkin's *Long/Home*, though she'd always scared the hell out of him, some sense of chivalry makes him call her Princess rather than Leia as Luke does, and he says "he'll never understand her", he still tells Luke he considers them "one hell of a threesome" (I'm *assuming* he means himself, Luke and Leia), and he's overjoyed when she returns safely.

Han and Leia get along well enough in the Frazers' story for her to good-naturedly tease him with a remote while he practices with a lightsabre, and in Matthews' *Far Sector* she casually appropriates his drink with no retaliation on his part. He's concerned with her illness in *Marketable Commodity* by Hendricks and Block, but it may be as much for Luke's sake as hers, considering his guarded reaction to her in Hendrick's earilier *Logaria*, in which he seems to be tolerating her at best. (The stories are set in the same universe.)

Hostility is the dominant feeling in several other stories, sometimes mixed with sexual feelings. This mixed reaction is the theme of Block's *Gratitude*: Han misinterprets (deliberately?) Leia's signals, thinking she wants to initiate a "relationship"; when she corrects this impression he gets a bit rough, kisses her hard as collection for the favor he did her and retreats before she can react verbally or physically. In *The Set Up* by Denise Edwards, Han's own vague jealousy concerning Luke and Leia opens the way for Vader to plant ideas such as that Leia's afraid he might lose control of himself if she favored him, and that he loves her (possibly true) but she never gave him a chance. Part of the mental torture consists of hallucinations in which he kills Luke and Leia in a jealous rage, hating himself for such a reaction when he's back in control of his mind for even a short time.

Munson has a somewhat different hostility angle: Han sees Leia as using Luke (who's so in love he can't think straight anyway) and feels he ought to give the kid some help before it's too late.

Walton and Jeffords in *Hamlor* and Walton in *Boredom* think that Han and Leia will continue the hostile relationship of SW. In *Hamlor* he *knows* Leia will be back safe from her private mission -- he's on base now and she needs someone to yell at. He never fails to be irritated by her (sometimes I wonder if he's actually looking for ways to get her mad at him!) and just knows that if she's in trouble, he'll have to get her out. He's willing to admit that she sort of grows on you, but when he gets hold of an Imperial tape about her he can't resist playing it on the *Falcon* -- of course, for the right price he'll give it to her, *after* he's seen the whole thing! In *Boredom* they get along like Snoopy and the cat next door, to the point where he's downright paranoid about her and he worries about Luke always mooning about her with no chance of getting anywhere -- she's interested only in the rebellion. Han's attiude seems to soften ever so slightly in Walton's *Birthday Present*, thought, when Han and Chewie make a point of coming backfor her birthday with a custom-made blaster and rig to go with it -- Han knows what will appeal to her, all right! And it seems more obvious by now that he does have mixed feelings about her rather than simply undiluted hostility -- this story takes place after the previous two. Maybe Walton's

coming around to the point of view of the relationship presented in TESB.

In Jeffords' *Hail and Farewell*, on the other hand, Han is always either deliberately provoking or on the defensive around Leia, while in Klinck's *Pay Off* he says "'Royalty won't be friends with a commoner'".

Gonzales' *Marriage Secret* whows Han as ver ambivalent. He pretends Leia's his wife to get her into the hospital, but gets very irritated by Chewie's teasing him about it. He tells Leia he's not about to ruin his life by marrying her, but it doesn't ring quite true. She can be nice, sometimes, he admits, but when *he* tries to be nice he gets insulted. When he tells Luke that he's sure Leia doesn't feel the same about both of them and that she'll probably marry Luke before Han even *thinks* about marriage, there's a definate feeling of rationalization about the statement.

Quite a variety of views about Han Solo, no? Sometimes I thing the Han of fanzines is even more interesting than the original! It's a pity George Lucas seems determined to play down the character (as evidenced by all the SW spinoffs featuring everybody *except* Han; even Lando Calrissian gets publicity that Han doesn't get). What will happen to active SW fandom if Han is killed in the next movie, considering how interested this fandom is in Han as opposed to the other characters? I suppose it's faintly possible that fannish interest may keep him alive, especially with the new story possibilities opened up by TESB. Nobody knows how much detail Lucas has worked out for future films and how locked in to certain ideas he may be. We can only hope the fannish interest willhave some influence.

I'm really looking forward to the next year's zine offerings based on TESB. It'll be fascinating to see how writers' views change to fit the expanded characterization, and how the writers will take up the expanded view from the movie and develop it further. Fanzine reading will be more interesting than ever!

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Gleason, Marie	*I Know What I'm Doing*	FALCON'S FLIGHT #3
Gonzales, Pat	*Marraige Secret*	FALCON'S FLIGHT #5
Gregory, Liza	*The Triumphant Defeat*	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #2
Hall, Anna Mary	*Business as Usual*	SHOWCASE MAY 1979
Hendricks, Judi	*Assault on Logaria*	PEGASUS #3
	Stowaway	SCUM & VILLAINY
	Tega Run	WARPED SPACE #38
	A Marketable Commodity (with Block)	PEGASUS #4
Hill, Kelly	*Free Enterprise*	WARPED SPACE #31/32
	Heads I Win, Tails You Loose	TWIN SUNS #1
	Superstition Run	FALCON'S FLIGHT #1
	Wandering Star	WARPED SPACE #33/34
Holley, Melinda	*The Talia Stone*	FALCON'S FLIGHT #5
	Renegade (with Perry)	FALCON'S FLIGHT #2

Horvath, JoLynn	*The Jedi Spirit*	JEDI JOURNAL #1
Inglewright, Hope	*Brothers All*	FALCON'S FLIGHT #3
Jeffords, Christine	*Hail and Farewell*	TWIN SUNS #1
	Jedi's Journey	GALACTIC FLIGHT #3
	Smuggler's Passage	GALACTIC FLIGHT #1
	Venture to Hamlor	GALACTIC FLIGHT #2
Kirkland, Dyane	*Emme's Diary*	SKYWALKER #1,2
Klinck, Karen	*After the Battle*	JEDI JOURNAL #2
	The Pay-Off	JEDI JOURNAL #2
Lauzon, Lee	*Knightsbane*	STAR JOURNEYS
Malkin, Michelle	*Long, Long Way From Home*	TWIN SUNS #1
Matthews, Susan	*Corellian Wake*	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #3
	Devil and Deep Space	GALACTIC FLIGHT #3
	Don't Believe it for a Minute	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #1
	Excerpts From a Corellian Diary	FALCON'S FLIGHT #3,4,5
	Ghost in Far Sector	TWIN SUNS #1
	Kinmeet	GALACTIC FLIGHT #2
	Widowmaker	FALCON'S FLIGHT #2
Mularski, Carol	*Renaissance*	WARPED SPACE #33/34
Munson, Pat	*Promotion*	SHOWCASE MAY 1979
Nowakowska, Maggie	*Corell Also Exports Pirates*	MOONBEAM #3
	Last Flight of the Millennium Falcon	SKYWALKER #2
	Nothing Left to Lose	SKYWALKER #3
	The Reluctant Rebel	GUARDIAN #2
	A Tale of Two Lukes	TIME WARP #3
	Vintage 6080	SKYWALKER #1,2
Oslo, Eva M.E.	*The Duel*	JEDI JOURNAL #1
Paciello, Jackie	*No Reward is Worth This*	WARPED SPACE #31/32
	Resurgence	WARPED SPACE #39,40
	The Continuator (with Block)	WARPED SPACE #42
Perry, Donna	*Renegade* (with Holley)	FALCON'S FLIGHT #2
Rogow, Roberta	*What Good is a Reward*	SHOWCASE, MAY 1979
Sacksteder, Ronnie	*No Time for Our Sorrows*	TWIN SUNS #1
Sidwell, Janice	*Mission: Power Failure*	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #1
	Special Delivery	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #1
	Surprise Attack	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #1,2,3
Tagar, Janal	*The Corellian Code*	JEDI JOURNAL #1
Walton, Mark	*Birthday Present*	GALACTIC FLIGHT #3
	Boredom	GALACTIC FLIGHT #3
	Venture to Hamlor	GALACTIC FLIGHT #2
Wilson, Ann	*Intruder*	MOS EISLEY TRIBUNE #3
Zeek, Anne Elizabeth	*The Cincinnatus Caper*	TIME WARP #3
	Catch Fire, Draw Flame (With Barb Wenk)	WARPED SPACE #43

Rainbows

Kelly Hill

illustrated by Martynn

It was raining again, the second night in a row. Inside the tiny trailer it was almost as dark as it was outside. Ken Boyd sat in one corner of the hide-a-bed sofa, long legs stretched out before him and a can of beer in one hand. The phone had rung a few minutes ago and the voice on the other end was a ghost from his past, a past he'd almost succeeded in forgetting -- if you didn't count the nightmares. Jack Dunne was coming to Sedalia four years after Munroe had pulled them and Adcox out of the enemy fire in 'Nam. They'd all been medevaced out in different directions, and the last Ken had heard, Jack was in an acorn academy in Tokyo. Four years was a long time, an eternity, and Jack's voice had reminded him of promises he'd made, ones he'd never thought he'd have to keep.

Ken got up and gazed out the window at the starless Missouri night, at the rain and the rundown farmhouse that belonged to his grandparents and would one day be his. Four years and they were still waiting for him to come home. He couldn't, though, not yet. The boy Kenny that they'd loved and raised had been left behind somewhere in a 'Nam rice paddy. The man Ken that had come back was a stranger with the same face. They seemed to understand and didn't press him, and Ken appreciated that. Someday soon, maybe ....

He finished off the beer and tossed the empty can in the direction of the already full wastebasket. It bounced ff and as he bent to retrieve it he noticed how many cans were already in the trash. He hadn't realized he'd been putting that much away. *Better cut down,* he thought, *no sense ending up like old Jim Wilkins. The man ain't hardly drawn a sober breath since World War II.* But then Jim had lost an arm in the fighting and it still pained him sometimes. He supposed the man had a good excuse for it. Except for the bullet path traced on his left shoulder, all Ken's scars were inside, and a lot of them would be a long time healing. The beer maybe didn't help the healing process, but at least it eased the hurt -- sometimes, anyway. There were times when nothing could help.

He bundled the garbage into a plastic bag and took it out as far as the door, dropping it outside. Even just that far out drenched him. He pulled back in quickly, grabbed a towel and dried his unruly hair, making it more disheveled still. It had been given a godawful butchering in the army -- Jack had dubbed it 'the grunt cut' -- and he'd never bothered to have it properly barbered since. He finished with the towel and tossed it into an already cluttered corner. It draped over a dark something standing there -- his guitar case.

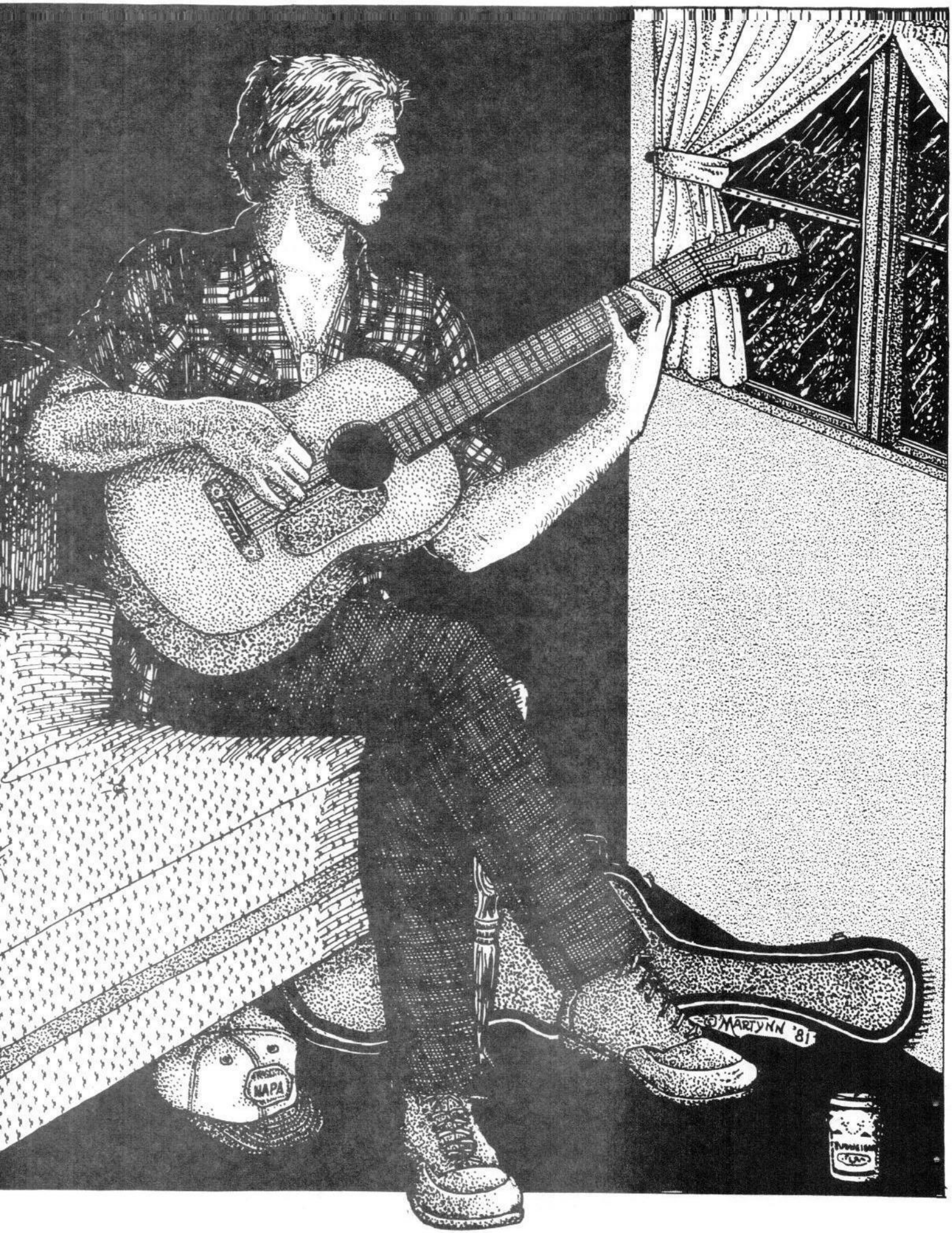
On an impulse, Ken picked up the case, laid it on the floor and opened it. The case was scratched and battered, but the instrument inside looked new and almost unused. Brightly polished, the golden top gleamed even in the dim light, and the smooth rosewood on the fingerboard had mother-of-pearl inlay. Ken took it in his hands and strummed a chord tentatively. The rich mellow notes swlled up around him. When even beer couldn't anesthetize the pain, often the music could, and he accorded the giver of the music the respect it deserved.

He fingered a run smoothly on the frets -- he was a country boy and had cut his teeth on banjo and guitar music. He worked on an intricate chord pattern for a moment, the concentration showing fully in the deep-set hazel eyes, replacing the look of despair that had been there. The pattern came to a successful conclusion and he smiled slightly. Damn, it had been a long time since he'd tried that one -- he was really surprised he could still do it. He settled into some aimless picking for a while, only half paying attention to what he was doing. Almost without his knowledge his fingers slipped into a recognizable rhythm. It was a song someone had taught him a few years ago, shortly before he came home from 'Nam. It seemed to describe his life so well that, as much as the song hurt, he couldn't help doing it now and then. A few bars in the lazy picking rhythm alone, then he hadded his voice ot it, a soft full melancholy baritone:

"Who's passin' dreams around this morning, bright and early?
Might be better if he'd stayed in bed.
Maybe he oughta let us be, find something else to do,
Because, God help me, I've been dreamin' too... "

Dreams -- rainbows, Jack had called them -- had kept them all sane during the fighting. Munroe, the architect and organizer of the 'worm squad', Adcox, whom Ken hadn't taken to at first because he was black and college educated -- he soon learned that there was no room for prejudice in a foxhole. And Jack Dunne, who'd dragged the country boy into the scheme with sheer enthusiasm. Ken remembered the hours the four of them had spent discussing the business-to-be. The business that never was, and never would be -- unless Jack belatedly tried to ressurect it.

**reprinted from PEGASUS 4, vol. 2*


MARTYNN '81
NAPA

"Leroy, he liked racing, he was doing well,
Folks who know say he was rising fast.
Lost control, y'know, his car flew all to hell,
And now he's down the corner, pumpin' gas .... "

Lost control ... He'd done that, all right -- lost control of his life, his future, even his own emotions. One of his own private rainbows, the one that kept him going all the time he was fighting, was to come home, take the Camaro he'd left with his grandparents for safe-keeping, customize it and run it in the stock car races in Sedalia. The shelf above the couch would be a good place to put the trophies he'd win. He did fix up the car, painted it vivid red and orange, and took it to the track -- and watched his dream dissolve the first day. Whatever it took to get that car onto the dirt circle and drive it, the part of Ken that used to run the roads at top speed for the hell of it, that part had been shot away somewhere back there, hever to be found again. Still, every weekend he took the car to the track, and every time found another excuse not to race. He seemed to be subconsciously punishing himself, but he didn't really know why.

The last note of the song died away and the guitar remained silent. There was no sound in the little trailer at all except for the constant pattering of the rain. Ken stared into the semi-darkness, pain etched for a moment into every line of his face. Where had all those rainbows gone? Why couldn't he ever seem to find them anymore? Or, when he did find one, why did it shatter into dust and blow away, leaving him with nothing but emptiness? And why did it have to hurt so much?

Ken gave himself a mental shake. That song did it to him every time, sent him into a royal blue funk. Things would get better, he told himself, Hell, they sure couldn't get much worse. Jack was coming and it had been a long time since they'd seen each other. It would be good having company for a while. Carefully Ken replaced the guitar in its case, snapped the locks shut and leaned it back into the corner. The beer and music combined had made him sleepy, so he readied himself for bed. He didn't bother pulling the couch out and converting it this time; the sofa was a little narrow but it would do for tonight. Blankets and pillow collected, he settled in, turned off the light, and prayed to a God he wasn't sure he still believed in to keep away the nightmares that night. He'd have to be in town early tomorrow morning to meet Jack, and he wanted to be at his best. A wide yawn split his face for a moment, and the lids settled down slowly over the hazel eyes. A few minutes and he was asleep, blessedly dreamless, and the last sound he heard was the rain still beating on the roof and walls in a soft tatoo. Who knew? Maybe if it was still raining in the morning, it would bring a rainbow with it ....

"Who's Passing Dreams Around?" by Tom Paxton, copyright 1973, Warner Bros. Records

Han and the Irate Husband

Gracia Fay Elwood

He: I'm inclined to be amused about the whole thing.

She: I'm glad you see it in the long perspective.

He: It's actually a bit of a relief. Everybody needs a vice. You don't smoke or drink or overeat, or even like coffee, and you gave up divinity fudge. I'd feel pretty sybaritic if you didn't have a weakness somewhere.

She: Okay, call it a weakness. I suppose you find it embarassing.

He: A little. Couldn't you come up with a more socially acceptable vice?

She: Darling, I didn't find this vice, it found me. It's not my fault! You didn't pick yours either.

He: All right, so it's legit. *(Pause)* But do you have to hang his pictures in our bedroom?

She: Well, where else do you suggest? The kitchen or the living room would be more embarassing, wouldn't they?

He: How about the kid's room?

She: Well...

He: What with the toy *Falcon* and Artoo Detoo and the action figures and the coloring books, they'd fit right in. You could contemplate Han while you sit on the floor coloring with the kids.

She: I can't contemplate Han very well when I'm playing with the kids.

He: Well, whenever they get bored and wander off and you go on coloring it should work fine.

She: Um...maybe. But I don't see why the pictures can't stay right where they are. I keep telling you there's really no competition.

He: I'm not convinced. I don't like having Han look over my shoulder.

She: He's not looking over your shoulder, he's too preoccupied with his own fears. Look, he's *suffering* in those pictures. I don't want you to hurt like that. It's a different part of my life altogether. You and I have fun in that room.

He: Yeah! But I'd have more fun if you'd move Han out.

She: Sigh...If you have to feel competitive it should be reassuring to know that there is this one competition you're bound to win. After all, Han *is* imaginary. And your touchability is one of the things I like best about you.

He: He's got a real body.

She: Only on loan from time to time. And it's never around here so far as I've noticed.

He: He'd better not be.

She: Of course not. It's really a very spiritual thing. Think of the pictures as ikons. I like to use that tear in his eye as a focal point for meditation.

He: It sounds pretty idolatrous.

She: It's just a focal point! Even I know that Han Solo isn't God.

He: Sometimes I wonder...Have you checked with God about this?

She: Of course. God is amused about the whole thing...Besides, She understands that there's really no competition.

HISTORY

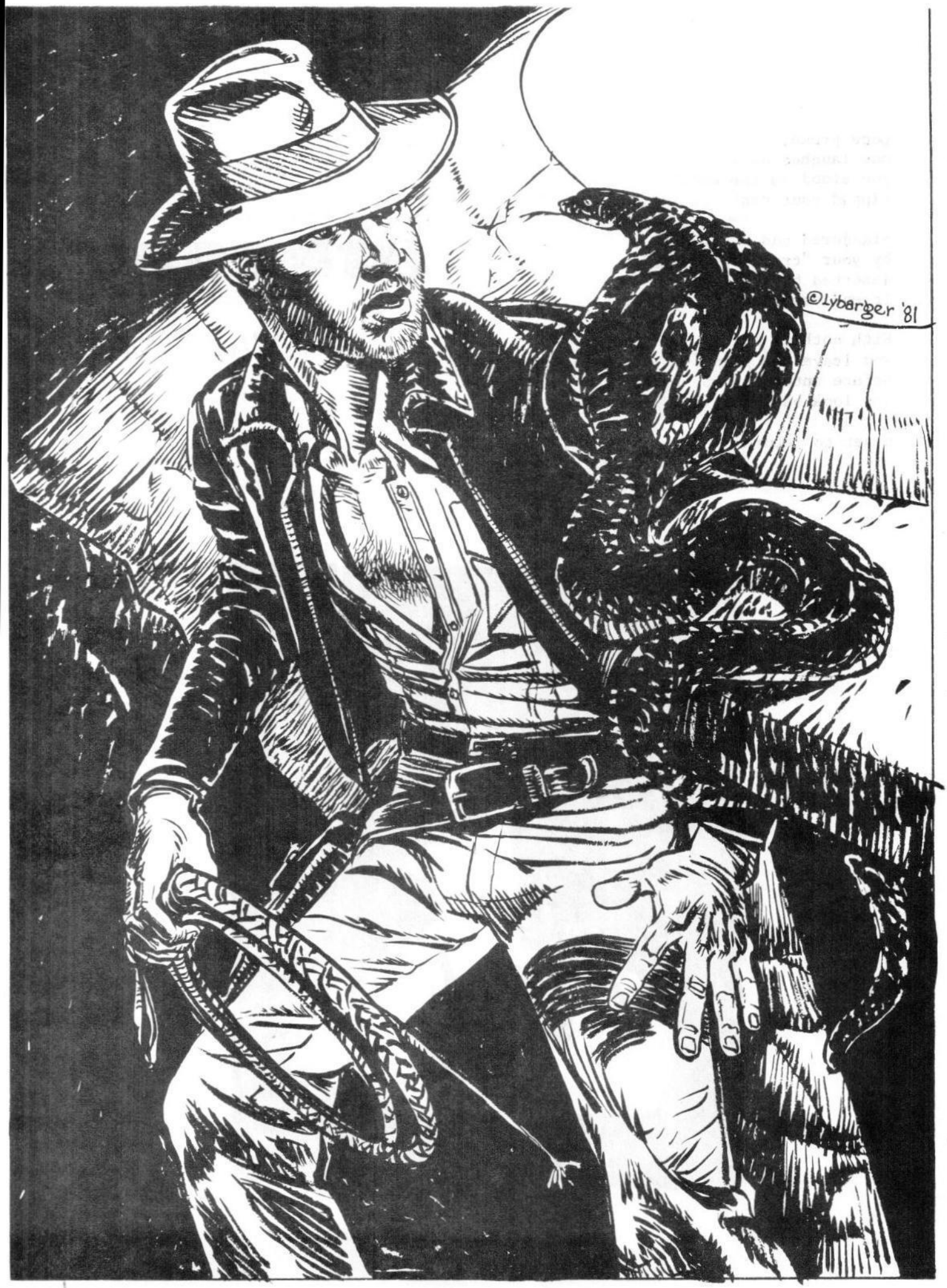
Kathy Percy

Once proud,
now laughed at -
you stood as the smiling general
ripped your rank and insignia away!

Slandered and cheated
by your "trusted friends" -
deserted by your girl,
friendless, except for a Wookiee!

With nothing left
you leave the planet you once called home -
before entering hyperspace,
you look back one last time,

never to return!


©Lybarger '81

Death Defier

Death defying feats of skill
Provide a little hope
That man perhaps does have a chance
To live immortal life.

Going to the silver screen
That promotes a thrill
Takes us from our drudgery
Gives us back our dreams.

We go to watch the death defier
Risk his life unendingly
To forget for a moment
No one cheats the Reaper.

Minutes steal quickly by
Action scenes pound our senses
Uneasy laughter spills from us
As the end approaches.

Love intermingles
Giving shape to frightened lives
Seemingly conquering obstacles
As easily as the risk-taker.

To show invincibility
Is the adventurer's goal
To prove that one is able to
Walk away from death.

The death defier lies to us
The dream maker casts his spell
We tend to forget we're mortal men
Foolish in our expectations.

Judith A. Balcombe

THE INVISIBLE FAN

Eva Albertsson

illustrated by Wanda Lybarger

Once upon a time there was a famous Actor, on whose door-step the ladies were wont to camp, and in whose back-yard a starship once landed.

But before it did, various other things happened--

One morning the famous Actor was standing in his hotel room packing his suitcase, for this was the last shooting day, and he was returning home that night. The room was part of a luxurious suite, but the suitcase was old, for the Actor was a humble man who saw no reason to get himself another, while this one still held together. And because he was such a humble man, he never brought much with him either, so the old suitcase served its purpose well.

As he stood there packing his things, it occurred to him that his blue shirt was missing. He started looking for it everywhere, but try as he might, he could not find it. While he was searching however, he wound up in front of the bathroom mirror. This reminded him that he was due down at the studios in half an hour, and that he had meant to rehearse a few postures and faces for his role, before he went down there. His part was that of a daring space-pirate, and so he tried a few melodramatic stances, one more dashing than the next. They all came out well, but still the Actor was not quite satisfied. It then occurred to him that maybe he was starting to take himself too seriously, so he finished off his rehearsal with a few comic faces which had nothing to do with his present part. But as he was doing the last one, he suddenly heard laughter behind him. Astonished, he looked into the mirror. He had left the door of the bathroom wide open, so most of the room was clearly visible in the mirror, yet he could see no one besides himself. He turned and walked back into the room. He searched the whole suite, but could not find anyone. Still, his search was not totally fruitless, for under the bed he found his blue shirt.

"Now what the hell is it doin' under there?" he muttered aloud. To his shocked amazement a voice answered him.

"The hotel cat was playing with it yesterday night, and it was she who dragged it under your bed," the voice said.

Frightened now, the Actor looked around him, but still there was nobody to be seen.

"Where are you?" he asked, shakily.

"I'm sitting here, right beside your suitcase," the voice said, and sure enough, to the right of the old valise there was a depression in the soft surface of the bed, but nothing more.

"I-I can't see," the Actor said, wondering to himself if it was really wise to admit this.

"Of course you can't," the voice coolly informed him, "I'm invisible."

The poor Actor swallowed and tried to convince himself this was not happening, when the voice continued in the same matter-of-fact vein: "It really wasn't my intention to frighten you, and I would have kept absolutely quiet, if it had not been for those faces you made. They were so outrageously funny, I just couldn't help laughing, I'm sorry."

"Thank you--I think," the Actor said. "Who are you, and what are you doing in my room?" he added, for he had decided that as long as he were off his head, he might as well converse his illusions. Maybe that would make his predicament more bearable.

"I'm a member of a highly devoted unofficial fan club of yours, and I wanted to be near you every one those minutes when no others can, because of their sad handicap--I'm referring to visibility."

The Actor's head was spinning, but despite the overwhelming nature of the news, he seemed also to detect a slight accent in his visitor's speech, so he asked.

"Where d'you come from?"

"Oh, a long way off," the voice said, non-committally.

But now the Actor was reminded of something else his guest had said. "You told me the cat was playin' with my shirt last night? How long've you been here?"

"Now, ever since you came to town of course," the voice replied. "I checked in only minutes before you did."

The Actor felt his skin crawl. He had had attempts on his privacy before, but this was something else. "Where've you been sleepin' all this time?" he asked.

"Right beside you, and a sweet experience it was," the voice stated contentedly.

"You're--female?" the Actor queried, more to confirm his suspicions, than because he had any doubts.

"You mean you couldn't *tell*?" For some reason she sounded definitely annoyed. "People keep telling me I have an unusually deep voice, but--"

"How come I never noticed you?" he wanted to know.

"Oh, I always waited until you were sound asleep, before I crawled in, and I was up at the first trace of dawn. Four hours of sleep per night is ample for me."

Perhaps this would have the struck the Actor as somewhat weird, had he not at that moment glanced at his watch. He had spent nearly an hour talking to this strange fan! They must be waiting for him down at the studios, and quite likely they were hopping mad by now, Time was money.

Absent-mindedly, he placed his hands where--going by the depression on the bed--her shoulders ought to be. There was something, but it did not feel right, somehow. But at the moment he was too upset to pay much attention.

"Listen, sister," he said, "I'm in an awful rush. Work started half an hour ago, and I'm late. You can't stay here, you gotta understand that,"

"Sure," she said reasonably, "Seeing as how you're leaving tonight anyway."

He let go her 'shoulders', to point a finger at where her face should be. "You be outa here by the time I get back this afternoon!"

In the doorway he stopped for a moment, turning once more towards the bed. "And don't try to fool me; from now on I'll prove quite good at perceiving your presence!"

The door slammed behind him, leaving the rooms quiet.

Down at the studios everything seemed to go wrong. It started in the parking lot, where the Actor momentarily forgot about the left-hand traffic, and very nearly crashed into the Producer's car which was on its way out. Hearty curses ringing in his ears, the Actor made his way to the proper set, where Mr. Flukeberger, the Director, was awaiting him, watch in hand.

"Finally slept it off?" the Director said, acidly.

The color rose in the Actor's cheeks, as he answered, "I haven't touched a drop for weeks--I know I'm late, an' I apologize, but I was unexpectedly tied up."

"So?" the Director commented, not believing him, "doing what?"

The Actor did not answer. It had just occurred to him that he had better keep to himself the invisible reason for his delay. Instead he said, "How 'bout getting on with this, before we lose any more time?"

But, it was simply one of those days. It was hot under the lights, frightfully hot, for the set represented a humid desert world. Unfortunately, this combination had proved impossible to find in real life, and therefore it had to be built. Unhealthy mists were being blown about over a barren landscape, and the glaring light was beating down.

Outside, it was raining. The sound-crew were having problems; malicious mikes tended to pick up the rain, as it fell on the roof.

Out there, in the middle of the set, in the merciless brilliance, stood the famous Actress, dressed up in her Princess' attire. She had been ready off and on for over half an hour now, and the heat was getting to her. Around her cameraman and cameragirls had cast off their shirts; make-up people and lighting crew were also running back and forth in their undershirts, but for herself, a Senator's formal dress was required, and she had no choice but to suffer. Just as her make-up was definitely starting to run, she saw the Actor come out of his dressing room, looking for all the world like a true space-pirate.

But Mr. Flukeberger was not yet satisfied. With an ill-tempered eye towards the Actor's tennis shoes, he roared, "This is no football field. What happened to your boots??"

The Actor glanced at his feet. "Sorry, I forgot," he admitted. Then, with a pleading look at the Director, "But it's hot," he said. "And she's been waiting out there long enough; how about just keepin' my feet off camera, for a while?"

Mr. Flukeberger clenched his teeth, rolling his eyes heavenward as if questioning the justice of his fate. "This is an *action* picture," he explained with exaggerated softness, "your feet are *IN*!! Who's directing, you or me??"

"All right, all right," the Actor said, "but I doubt any space pirate in his right mind would wear black boots in 40 degrees, or whatever it is in here."

"*All* pirates wear boots," the Director retorted. "It's in their nature." He slapped his copy of the script. "And according to this here story he *isn't* in his right mind! No go and change! And be quick about it!"

The Villain of the plot, a black-clad giant, now loomed his way in, heavily breathing. Due to the poor vision through his mask, he nearly tripped over a couple of cords and let out a muffled curse. "Don't tell me you haven't even *started* yet?" he complained. "Could you please turn the fan on me or let me shed a cloak or something; you can't just keep me waiting around in this outfit; it's a positive sauna in here!"

The Director shot him a vicious glance, just as the Actor walked back in, his costume now complete. "These boots'll be the death of me," he groaned under his breath.

But the Director heard him. "That's what you get paid for!" he roared. "Now get out there, and kiss her!"

But the presumed Princess held up a hand. "I can't," she shouted, "I've been sweating under these lights for so long now, my costume is all soaked through, and it shows. You've got to let me change!"

The Director disagreed. "He's just pulled you out of the water," he said. "You're *supposed* to be soaked. Now, get on with it!"

"How did I emerge with this hair-do intact?" she wondered, but was outshouted by the Actor's voiced astonishment: "*Water*?? I thought this was supposed to be a desert planet."

"It's a damp desert," the Director snapped. "Besides, the script is no concern of yours. Use your damn imagination, that's what you get paid for! Are you, or are you not, going to kiss the Princess?"

The Villain removed his mask with a groan. He was not going to be in on this until after the kiss, and sweat was pouring inside his black armor.

The Actor and Actress assumed their pose, and the cameras started rolling, slowly zooming in on them.

"*CUT!*" the Director yelled, "Her hair's coming down again; where's the confounded hairdresser?"

"Never mind," the Actor said, "I'll fix it, I can see from here what's wrong."

The Director turned beet-red. "You'll do nothing of the kind!" he shouted. "Do you want the union on us? Hairdresser! Over here!"

Her hair back in place, the Actress resumed her position, and the Actor put his arms around her. The cameras started.

"*CUT!*" the Director roared. "Would you *mind* holding her properly? It looks like you were trying to hoist her off her feet!"

"But she *is* short," the Actor objected, much to the Actress' amusement. Right then, a drop of water fell on her head. The roof was leaking.

"Hold everything!" the Director cried. "Ten minutes' break while somebody fixes the roof!"

"Now there's something I *can* do," the Actor said, "and don't worry about the union; I happen to hold a card."

"Not in this country you don't," the Director cautioned him, almost literally pushing him off stage. The Villain muttered something and stalked out, leaving his helmet behind, on the bench where he had been sitting.

It took an hour rather than ten minutes, but then they could finally get started. This time everything seemed okay; Princess and Pirate at their proper places, him bending down rather than lifting her off the 'ground', cameras rolling, until--

"*CUT!* What d'you two think you're up to? We're supposed to be able to show this to Roman Catholic grandmothers, will you *please* behave? Try again!"

"With pleasure," the Actor commented, causing his leading lady to blow the next take also, with a giggle at the wrong moment.

Fifteen retakes later, they finally had it, and the poor Villain could get on stage. He did--and started looking for his helmet. It was nowhere to be seen. Soon he had them all searching for it--but no, it was gone. Until the exasperated Mr. Flukeberger sank down in his chair, and found himself sitting on the missing object. The Villain swore he had left it on the bench, not in the Director's chair, but nobody would admit to having moved it.

The unmistakable sound of faint laughter drifted to the Actor's ears, and he closed his eyes with a sigh. This was going to be a long day.

Surprisingly, although everybody else's scenes were delayed by several hours, the Actor's own were all shot by four o'clock, only an hour late. Wearily, and in a rotten mood he started back to his hotel, nearly forgetting to turn his rented car in on the way. Shortly before closing time at the garage he remembered, drove the car over and took the bike out of the boot. It was one of the studio bikes--a lady's bike, that being a more all-round model--used mainly for getting between sets and out to lunch, but the Actor had been told he could borrow it for the last few hours till his plane left. He could always send somebody back to the studios with it, before he took a taxi to the airport.

As he stepped off the bike outside his hotel, he had to practically wade through a bunch of fans that were waiting on the doorstep. He very nearly yelled at them, before he reminded himself that it was not their fault that he had had a rotten day. With forced patience he signed everything they held out, the last items in an all but illegible scrawl. Then, wearily, he fought them off as they clung to him, and entered the lobby. One of them would not let go. She followed him all the way up to his rooms, all the while beseeching him for something he refused to listen to. Almost sobbing with fatigue he opened the door to his suite--and the girl slumped to the floor.

"Get in quick!" a deplorably familiar voice advised him. "She'll be all right, don't worry, I just stunned her."

The Actor closed the door behind him. There was murder in his eye. If he had only known where she was!

"I thought I told you to get outa here!" he growled.

"Wrong," came the crisp retort. "All you said was I couldn't stay. And I didn't. I only just came back."

"I *know* that! You followed me down to the studios, didn't you? There was enough polter-geistin' goin' on around that set to last a full damn seance! That was you, wasn't it?"

She laughed, flattered. "So you figured that out? Well, I had nothing to do with the roof leaking--"

"--but that was about it, yeah, I see," the Actor commented.

"Well," she resumed, "I *did* pull that girl's hair down once or twice--just for fun, you understand; I wanted to watch that scene again--and I hid your boots at first, hoping you wouldn't think of them--childish, I guess, sorry about that. Also, it was me who tripped up that black horror with the cord, and hid his mask--he looks better without it anyway."

The Actor fought for his calm. "Do you realize you wasted hours of expensive shooting time, and--and how come you don't know their names, if you've been a fan of mine for as long as you claim?" it suddenly struck him.

"My information has been scant," she replied, evasively.

"Apart from that, you could easily have caused me to miss my plane tonight, *and* you had the nerve to knock a girl out in front of my door--don't you have any idea at all, what a bad light that could put me in?"

"I didn't knock her out," the voice corrected him perkily. "I stunned her."

"GET OUT!" the Actor roared, grabbing hold of something in front of him and shoving it out the door and into the hall, where he had the satisfaction of hearing it tripping over the unconscious girl's body, landing on the floor with a solid thump. Apparently, his invisible visitor was no light-weighter.

Quickly, the famous Actor set about packing the rest of his things. He was not going to stay in this crazy country one minute longer than absolutely necessary.

He was almost done when he heard a tremendous roar of engines outside. Probably an aeroplane flying low, he decided. He would have taken a look at it, but all the curtains were drawn, and he could not be bothered to go and open them. It sounded as if the thing set down only a couple blocks away--odd. He frowned thoughtfully, then he shrugged and resumed his packing.

The Space Pirate coughed violently in the unfamiliar, thick air, as he walked along cobbled streets, his First Mate at his side.

"Rrowrrr?" the latter said, for he was of the Wookiee nation, and Human speech--whatever its origin--did not come easy to him.

"Will you stop worryin'?" the Pirate gasped. "Of course she'll be all right; if you remembered to lock her, that is?"

"Wrrrrrrh," the Wookiee reassured him.

On the doorstep of the luxurious hotel, fans still clustered. Their agitation on seeing the Pirate and his Wookiee copilot was unmistakable, but the pair simply waded through, disregarding them for the moment. There were more important matters to be dealt with here.

On the floor of the Actor's suite they found the stunned girl, and the Pirate flashed a quick grin at his friend. "I think we're close," he said. "That one's been blaster-stunned, and the locals don't carry blasters!"

The Wookiee muttered agreement.

The famous Actor looked up quickly, as he heard the door open. Astonished, he stared at the outlandish visitor, who looked so familiar, although the reason at first failed to register.

"How did you get in?" the Actor scowled.

The Pirate shrugged. "Door was unlocked," he stated in an outrageous accent. "Where is she?"

The Actor's eyes widened, as he took in the asymmetrical features, so like his own--but for the slightly over-pronounced cheek-bones, perhaps. Also, the hair was darker. Still, this was undoubtedly a man not supposed to exist. A man he had--impersonated?--more than once. He decided not to tell him so. He doubted the wisdom of offending the Pirate, whose golden eyes scrutinized him with a cold stare, and in whose hand a vicious-looking weapon rested. A weapon that should not be working, and yet--the Actor sighed. Only this day he had been forced to accept the reality of an invisible fan; why not this too, while he was at it?

"I said: where is she?" the Pirate repeated slowly.

"Where's who?" the Actor answered, genuinely bewildered.

"Arouk, the invisible girl, of course. Isn't she with you? We traced her to this building."

"What should an invisible girl--if there were such a thing--be doing in my rooms?" the Actor asked, with professionally convincing innocence.

But the other was not impressed. "Don't give me that," he said. "The stun-victim outside is evidence enough. She's been here."

"I haven't seen her," the Actor said, before he thought.

The golden eyes widened, and the Pirate burst out laughing. "No, I bet you have not," he grinned. "You'd be the first. Not even her parents have ever laid eyes on her. I hear her birth was quite a farce. They heard her yell, an' had to grope around to find out if she had all parts in the right places."

"And had she?" the Actor inquired politely.

"Oh yes. Apart from her 'deficient visibility' as they put it, she's quite a beauty. Well--for a Hut, that is."

"A *Hut*??" The Actor sat down, in a futile attempt to get his bearings. "Why don't you just tell me all about it?" he said. "Starting with how come you're out of the carbonite for one thing," he added wryly.

The Pirate eyed him curiously. "How come *you* know 'bout that?"

The Actor spread his hand. "I know many things," he said with a disarming smile.

The Pirate flashed him another dark eye, but decided not to pursue the matter. He sat down too, lowering his gun, even if he did not yet shove it back into its holster.

"Since you seem to know more about me than is really possible," he began, "I take it you've heard of Jabba the Hut?"

"I've--had my dealings with him, yes," the Actor nodded, congratulating himself on his straight face, for he was beginning to enjoy this.

"Oh," the Pirate said, "Then you know how unreasonable he can be. Strange fellow, as suave as you please, 'long as there's something in it for *him*. Well, apparently he had contracted this bounty-hunter, Boba Fett, to bring me in, so after the carbonizing process, Fett just up an' delivered me like another piece of cargo--

I'll have his head on a platter yet, roasted--an' was of course abundantly rewarded by Jabba, damn him. Anyway, Jabba opened the carbon can, brought me out of 'hibernation' gradually an' skillfully enough, ya might almost think he'd done it before--an' asked me if I was goin' to pay my debts or not. So I said of course I was--matter of honor an' all that--only, I didn't have any money 'bout me, an'--did ya ever hear a Hut *roar*? Quite an experience. Well, so I suggested he think of some other method of payment, seein' as how he was always catchin' me with my pockets empty. Didn't he want something done, for instance? Not that I was aimin' to wind up on his employment list, ya understand, only to pay him off this once. I figured he'd want me to compensate him for dumped loads in the past by running one for him free, an' I can't say I was fond of the idea, but I was willin' to do it, if only he'd keep his guns off me after that. But, well, if you've been in the business too, ya know: always let the customer name his price first; there's a good chance you'll get away with cut expenses; so I kept my mouth shut until he'd made his own suggestions.

"Well, he was quiet for a while, an' he seemed damn worried 'bout something too, an' then he came out with it. The run he wanted me to make was the wildest I've had to do yet, an' the reason was even wilder--the last thing I expected of Jabba was a soft heart--but he said this run would take care of my debts as far as he was concerned, so I took his offer, an' no comments."

The Pirate fell silent for a moment, tapping a knuckle against his teeth, as if lost in confused thought. The Actor grinned in recogintion. It looked like he had gotten it all right from the start; not only the Pirate's gestures, but also the cunning thoughtlessness, the cynical innocence, the confident helplessness, the depraved honesty, the rough vulnerability.

"You're not at liberty to disclose the nature of your client's offer?" the Actor said, taking exaggerated care not to fall into his character's mode of speech. He had a sudden apprehension his visitor might resent that.

"Huh? Oh, sure," the Pirate replied. "T'was like this. Jabba had a daughter. A real ravin' beauty of a female Hut, everybody keeps tellin' me--only, nobody has ever seen her, since--as I said--she was born with defective visibility. That's a euphemism--she lacked visibility altogether."

"Are they sure she exists?" the Actor blithely asked.

"Sure she exists. I told ya; there's nothing wrong with her audibility, palpability, vocal or mental equipment. As for the scent of a Hut, Chewie tells me it's something fierce, although I've never noticed it much, myself."

The Actor looked up. "Chewie's here with you?"

The Pirate jerked a thum over his shoulder. "Standin' guard outside."

"Oh no," the Actor moaned, momentarily closing his eyes. "This is a quiet, respectable hotel. You don't need--"

The Pirate leant forward with a conspiratory look, dangerously tapping his host on the knee with the blaster. "Let me tell ya something, kid. There ain't no such thing as a respectable hotel in the whole galaxy. Meaning one where ya can't get shot at. It all depends on what you're mixed up in. Sometimes not even that."

"Then let *me* tell *you* something," the Actor said. "This ain't your galaxy, kid."

With an expression somewhere between resentment and helpless defiance, the Pirate pressed his lips together.

"How endearing," the Actor thought in amusement. *"I must practice that face."*

"I know it ain't my galaxy," the Pirate said. "Trouble is, Arouk, Jabba's daughter, found a way to escape to it when she left home against her father's will, an' now he wants her back. That's why I'm here."

"What *was* her method?" the Actor wanted to know. "Quite apart from the distance, there ought to be a considerable time discrepancy involved."

The Pirate stared at him. "*Time* was the least of our problems. As for the rest, I don't rightly know. Jabba just gave me flyin' instructions, not the overall theory behind them. He just told me to bring her back or else."

"You said she was a raving beauty," the Actor mused. "Isn't she of age then?"

The Pirate shook his head. "With the Huts, comin' of age doesn't coincide with sexual maturity, not by a long shot. They have this concept of 'Proven Mental Stability' that one has to attain first."

"Then you are lucky not to be a Hut," the Actor thought, but he did not say it. "All right, she *was* here," he admitted as he rose, with a glance at his watch. "But she left. Sorry I can't help you."

The Pirate also stood. "I think you can," he said. "You're more familiar with this city than I. If ya help me look through it, we should stand a good chance of findin' her pretty fast."

The Actor shook his head. "Sorry. I've got a flight to catch."

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Suddenly, he found himself looking into the muzzle of the Pirate's pistol. "That's too bad," the Space-smuggler drawled. "'Cause you're gonna miss it. *You* lost her. You stay an' help find her, okay?"

Outside the door, the Actor found himself face to chest with an impressive specimen of the Wookiee race, rather different from the good-natured replica he usually had to deal with. The Simioid had thick, shining fur of a magnificient russet-brown shade, and there was something definintely--*untamed* about him. The stunned girl was nowhere in sight.

"[illegible]?" the Wookiee inquired.

"It's all right, Chewie," the Pirate reassured him. "He's agreed to help us find Arouk. After a little persuasion," he confessed.

On the front door steps they were beseiged by fans. The Actor welcomed the opportunity to stop and chat with them; maybe a chance would appear to slip away, while there was still time to catch his plane. Amusedly, he watched the Pirate gradually losing his patience. There were many notebooks, photos and slips of paper to be signed, and the Actor took his time, enjoying himself.

Suddenly he spotted the girl who had been stunned by Arouk, now awake and well, and approaching him with a determined expression on her face. Images of police enquiries and unfavorable headlines raced briefly through his mind, then he saw the Pirate calmly intercept her, taking a slip of paper from her hand, and signing it. The Actor stood close enough to see the signature, and for a moment the Universe reeled around him. Apart from a thick accent there had been nothing wrong with the Pirate's speech, but those letters were something else. They did not look like anything he had ever seen, and he could only hope the girl would attribute their illegibility to the Pirate's scrawly handwriting.

No such luck. She peered curiously at the strange lettering. "What language is that supposed to be?" she asked.

The Pirate grinned at her. "Why, Corellian of course," he said. "What else?" And, leaving the group of fans to stare dumbfoundedly after him, he walked away, followed by Actor and Wookiee.

But the furry giant attracted too much attention in the streets, and they decided to split up. The Wookiee voiced a suggestion to go and check on the ship, have a bite to eat, and stay aboard until dark. Then he would roam the harbor areas, parks and back alleys, any place where his appearance would not matter, even if it was noted.

The Pirate nodded. "Right," he said. "We'll join ya later, by the *Falcon*. And--take care, will ya? This is a weird place to say the least, an' we're both strangers here. No tellin' what could happen."

With a reassuring grunt, the Wookiee affectionately ruffled his friend's brown hair. The Actor grinned. Then he noticed something. "Hey," he said. "What about your gun? With artillery like that on your hips you attract just as much attention as your Wookiee friend. In a country where not even the police were armed, until quite recently, you're about as inconspicuous as a Bantha in a glass shop."

The Pirate pondered that. "Any reason I should believe ya?" he asked.

"None," the Actor replied. "Except you wouldn't be doing me any favor by getting yourself arrested; I'd probably miss my plane now anyway."

The Space-smuggler glared darkly at him. Then he shrugged. "Guess I'm off my head, but I trust ya," he said simply, as he unslung his blaster belt and handed it to his First Mate who shook his head and rumbled a warning. Their eyes locked.

"I know what I'm doin'," the Pirate said.

Growling his doubt, the Wookiee disappeared down the street. For a moment the Corellian stood looking after him, hands on hips and totally oblivious to the Actor beside him. There was something very touching about the total--unprotectedness he displayed.

"I haven't had anything to eat since lunch," the Actor remembered aloud.

"Well, let's go someplace an' get a bite first," the Pirate suggested readily. "Only--"

"Only what?"

"I don't s'pose they take Imperial Credits in the cantinas of this town?"

The Actor clenched his teeth. "Now, you *would* think of that, wouldn't you? All right, I'll pay. One one condition. We work out an intergalactical exchange system; say one pound equals double anything you suggest--don't you think I know you?--and you pay your own expenses back to me, okay?"

The Pirate chuckled. "Suits me. But what use would my credits be to you?"

"Curiosity value," the Actor retorted dryly.

Heads turned more than once, as the two men strolled down the street. Yet nobody seemed to actually recognize either of them, and the Actor was beginning to feel decidedly uneasy. "What the hell are they staring at?" he muttered out of the corner of his mouth.

The Pirate was used to being stared at when in the company of his furry First Mate, and he had momentarily forgotten that this could not very well be the reason now. For a moment he paused, bewildered, then he shrugged. "Guess we're just a striking pair," he grinned.

They were. So perfectly alike, they could have been brothers, yet different enough to set one another off. The Pirate's darker coloring and livelier temperament contrasted delightfully with the Actor's almost blond appearance and the more detached ease of his mannerisms.

Suddenly the Pirate stopped, grabbing the Actor's arm. "Hey, I just remembered something. Arouk has a passion for dancing. Not that I expect to find her that easily, but there's no point in not tryin'."

"What *are* you talking about?" the Actor mildly wondered.

"Well, seein' as how we have to find somewhere to eat anyway, why not try a cantina where there's some dancin' too? It's one of her favorite pastimes, according to Jabba, an' there's always a chance she hasn't gotten too far from here yet--it's a wild chance I admit, but--"

"Incidentally," the Actor interrupted him, "they are hardly 'cantinas', and they don't serve food in the discos, just drinks."

The Pirate frowned. "What's a disco?"

The Actor told him.

"Then she wouldn't have gone to one," the Pirate explained. "Bein' invisible, she can frequent any one of the real places, an' it doesn't cost her anything."

"The 'real' places, as you call them, won't let us in. We'd have to wear a tie, or a full suit or something."

The Pirate's helpless confusion was almost touching. "Name o' the Force, *why??*"

This required another--rather lengthy--explanation, complete with the Actor's own conjectures. "Of course," he added, "if you happen to have your best suit on board the *Falcon*--"

The Pirate shook his head. "I have, but it's distinctly Corellian. From what ya told me, your people might consider it indecent. An' there's definitely no *tie* to go with it. Rather the opposite, in fact."

Wisely resisting the urge to ask what that was supposed to mean, the Actor followed him down the street. After a while, the Corellian stopped so suddenly his companion bumped into him.

"Here," the Smuggler said with conviction. "Let's try it."

"That," the Actor remarked, "is a pizzeria."

"I don't care what ya call it. It's big enough to have dancing at the back there, an' nobody'll stand on formalities."

"How d'you know?" the Actor asked.

"It's a criminally owned joint. Such people take care not to offend their customers--the paying ones anyway."

"You only just landed in town," the Actor reminded him. "Yet you know this place is run by a syndicate of criminals?"

The Pirate gave him a friendly shove. "Oh, come off it, kid. The signs are all over the place!"

Recovering his balance--the Pirate's friendly gestures tended to be rather Wookiee-adapted--the Actor began to look at his surroundings with new eyes. He had thought he knew this city. And here an extra-galactic alien--who had not even been around long enough to know what a disco was--would cast one glance at a place and classify it in an instant. If he was going to be stranded in this city for some days, maybe a Corellian would prove useful to have around--

Their table was strategically chosen, on the borderline between the dance floor and the pizzeria proper.

"Ya don't know how to make wine," the Pirate commented, making a face at his glass. "But then, very few cultures do. How about workin' out that rate of exchange now? Would it be reasonable to say that one Milky Way Pound equals--what's wrong?" With consternation on his face, he watched the laughing Actor.

"One Milky Way pound!" the latter gasped. "That'd be something! Listen, innocent, it's not even Terran Pounds, it's British Pounds."

The Pirate's eyes widened. "You mean, you don't have galaxy-wide currency? Not even planet-wide? How the Sith can you trade?"

It occurred to the Actor that he had actually never thought much about that. "Look," he said, "for one thing, this galaxy isn't even colonized; we don't have space travel on *that* scale; not yet anyway. This is just one tiny little blob of civilization all on its own that--"

The Pirate shook his head. "I don't know why you're tryin' to tell me that. What about Mimosa, Acrux, not to mention Adhara and the Shaulan systems? Kid, I passed right through the hub on my way here--ya think I went blindfolded?"

Seeking desparately to grasp the significance of the Pirate's casual words, the Actor felt his head whirl. "Are you in all honesty telling me--there's life *out there?*" He made a sweeping gesture indicating the known and unknown universe, nearly knocking over his glass in the process.

The Pirate was looking just as bewildered. "Ya mean--ya didn't *know?* That *nobody* knows? On the whole damn planet? Oh, my--" His voice trailed off, as he suddenly went pale and had to hold on to the table for support.

"What's the matter?" the Actor solicitously asked, grasping the other man's hands. "Are you all right?"

Slowly, the color returned to the Corellian's cheeks. He nodded. "Just a trace of--vertigo, I guess," he said, almost wonderingly.

"In a spacer?" There was a distinct gleam of amusement in the Actor's eyes.

The Pirate took a swallow of his wine, grinning sheepishly. "Well, ya see, for a moment there I pictured what it would be like, livin' on a lump of dirt that was--in all accessible knowledge--totally isolated. I mean, when you're whizzin' through space--back an' forth an' updside down, as they say--of course ya can't *see* them most of the time, but ya know they're there; all the teemin' systems with their good an' rotten people--Imps, bounty hunters, customs officers an' what have you--but they're *there*. I suddenly felt like--like someone had peeled off the ship around me!"

Just as they were finishing their meal, the Actor spotted some weird proceedings in a far-off, dimly lit corner. Some six tables away, it looked as if food was disappearing off the plates, although there was nobody around. Two pizzas had been served while the couple from the corner table were up dancing, yet now there was very little left of either dish. The Actor nudged his partner, his eyes indicating the corner. "That her?"

The Pirate's bony face took on a grim expression. "Yeah. Seems we're in luck. Or else, *she* followed *us*. To tease us, no doubt. In which case she'll be lookin' our way. So here's what we'll do: you stay here an' don't take your eyes off that corner, but don't appear to be lookin' that way either, okay? I'll make a show of goin' to the men's room or someplace, but what I'll do is move around in a circle an' try to catch her unaware if I can. It's worth a try." He winked briefly, and was gone.

With an ostensibly absent-minded air, the Actor lit a cigarette, as he tried to keep an eye on the obscure corner. It was awfully hard to see if anything was still going on there, especially as the couple was now returning to their table. Before he had the chance to check their reactions to finding their empty plates, something gently touched his neck.

The something was strongly reminiscent of a little dry lizard's paw. He felt his skin crawl.

Slowly he put out his cigarette. Then, unexpectedly, he whirled, making a grab for her. He got hold of something, but she slithered out of his grip with an amazing, oily strength.

"Oh no, you don't," she chuckled, her voice covered by the music. "If you want to get hold of me, you'll have to act civilized. Dance with me."

He gave a start. "You're crazy!" he hissed, out of the corner of his mouth. "How can I dance with someone invisible?"

"Now, now, let's not have any discrimination," she said. "Who's to notice, in this poor light? Who's to count the couples in that crowd? Why, I can see no less than four threesomes from here, so who's to know?"

He sighed. "All right, if you promise to let us see you safely home afterwards--"

She giggled. "I have nothing against letting you *try*--"

The floor *was* crowded. Arouk would not even attempt any improvised patterns independently of her partner. She clung, and she clung tight. The poor Actor found his movements considerably hampered. He could not make out that she was shorter than he had first thought; she reached him to the abdomen, no further. On the other

hand, she was also a good deal stouter than his first impression had let him surmise, and her body had quite a few extraordinary protrusions, the purpose of which he could only guess at. None of his guesses were pleasant. Moreover, the only parts of her that seemed quite dry were her little lizard-like hands. The rest of her appeared to be drenched in some oily substance that he feared would stain his clothes visibly. Apparently, she did not need any clothes herself. He wished she had. Maybe she was a beauty by Hut standards, but if so, the Huts were not a breed he felt any particularly overwhelming desire to associate with.

The alien lady, however, seemed to be enjoying herself. She was positively flattening herself against him--touching and clawing him in the most unexpected places. Nor could he fend her off without atracting attention. As if this was not bad enough, she suddenly started sounding off in a muted murmur which after a while he realized must be her idea of singing.

To his relief he saw that the Pirate had returned to their table. As the music ended, he hastily thanked his partner for the dance, trying to gently push her in the direction of the Corellian. But she saw through his attempt. In an instant she wrenched free and was gone.

The Actor swore heartily, as he joined his friend.

"I could see *something* was up," the Pirate said, after listening to the other man's misfortunes. "I nearly thought that might be it. You shouldn't have tried to fool her. Remember she's Jabba's daughter. There isn't a lesson in cunning an' foul play she hasn't taken well to heart. You should've just grabbed her an' dragged her along."

"That's easy for you to say," the Actor objected. "How do you grab an oily creature like that? Anyway, before we do anything, I need a smoke."

He relit the cigarette he had started on--and only then did he notice the Pirate's uneasiness. "You don't smoke?" he asked.

The Pirate shook his head. "T'would play havoc with my reflexes in the long run. An' ya can't close a business deal while under the influence. Drink is about as toxic as I accept. Besides, there's no smokin' in the whole galaxy. Any more."

The Actor shot him a puzzled look. "This is just tobacco. Granted, it's a carcinogen, and a strong one, but it doesn't affect anybody's judgement."

The Corellian looked doubtful. "Oh yeah, I've heard of it. Ya mean, that stuff really exists? Those were the arguments of the plantation people on Lhakamar Three, though, of course, nobody believed them--"

The Actor looked at him, interested now. "No? What happened?"

"Well," the Pirate began, "T'was like this: drugs had been one of the main problems in the Imperial ranks for quite some time--mostly smoked ones, ranging in strength from near harmless to certain killers; there were about fifty thousand varieties at one time--the soliders took it, you see, an' high-rankin' officers too, especially those immediately under Vader--to forget their fear. So he was losin' people. An' when he didn't, they bungled their missions. So he got--annoyed. Swore he'd scrub the whole galaxy of smoke; an' then some busybody brought the Lhakamar system to his attention. Seven planets an' twelve moons suitable for at least *some* sentinent life-form--quite a record for inhabitability, in fact--an' all livin' off their smoke-herb plantations. Meanin' they had built their entire civilizations on profit made from the crops, though only a small part of the respective populations were actually growin' the stuff. Well, anyway, Vader took one of his juggernauts there, swept three planets clean--moons an' all--burnt everything right off 'em, plantations an' cities alike, boiled the seas, cooked the mountains. He didn't want to explode any worlds, so as not to disturb the orbit of the others, he said. Expected people to be thankful, no doubt. T'was a warnin' to the rest of the system to switch to something else for their economical footing, he said. Well, they tried, some of them, with famine an' disaster as a result, but the third planet an' her two moons refused. Said their stuff wasn't toxic. Vader replied he didn't believe them, an' he didn't care on way or the other anyhow. The rule was *no smoking*, an' he thank them to abide by it. They still refused, sent him a sample for analysis. He didn't analyze it. He blew up Lhakamar itself--there were fifty billion people in that system. Give or take a few--So, no, I don't smoke," he concluded lightly. "Nor have I seen anyone else doin' it lately--until now."

The Actor stared down at his cigarette. "And to think that it probably *was* nothing but tobacco--" he murmured.

The Pirate stretched, clasping his hands behind his head. "No matter," he said. "I've got troops an' bounty hunters enough to shorten my life. Don't need carcinogens."

The Actor's hazel eyes flashed. "You sound as if you thought fifty billion people were a--'reasonable price', or something."

But the Pirate's mask was back in place. "Not my job to judge," he shrugged. "I'm just a trader. But, I've lived for ninety Corellian years now, an' I've seen more evil deeds than one spin off results for the common good--an' the other way around too. Force take it all!" He yawned, closing his eyes.

"So you're not opposed to Vader then?" the Actor asked innocently.

The Pirate opened one eye. "'Course I am," he said, in mock amazement. "He's after *me!*" He grinned. "Besides, he's bad for business."

Suddenly the Actor craned his neck. "What's that commotion over there?"

It looked like an elderly woman was having trouble retaining her beer, although she was alone at her table. She was into her ninth bottle or so, and she was deeply resenting the gradual disappearance of her drink, devising several sly plans for catching her beer in the very act of stealing away. At first she merely looked away for a few seconds, then whirled back, to glare hard at her glass. Only to find the surface level sunk a tiny bit each time. By now her frustration had brought her to holding her glass firmly down with both hands, staring at it, as if she wanted to strangle it. At the tables next to her, heads had turned, and here and there a laughing comment was heard.

"It's Arouk," the Pirate said. "This time I ain't gonna wait around."

In five jumps from one table to another, upsetting them all along his way, he was at the old lady's side, diving across her lap, reaching for--thin air. The elusive Hut lady had seen him coming.

So had everybody else. Edging slowly off the beer-drinker's lap, he started a half-hearted apology, hastily deciding against it and backing off, under a hail of cheerful comments from surrounding tables. His eyes darted around the room for an exit--and met the cool gaze of two bouncers.

Sitting beside the Pirate on the curb, the Actor said, "You know, there's one rule of life that has a lot going for it; it's known as Thinking First."

The Pirate shot him a rueful glance. "But this way does add a bit of spice to life now an' then, don't ya think?"

"Sure," the Actor retorted dryly. "When I come to think of it, I can't recall ever having been thrown out of a pizzeria before..."

The Corellian gave him a friendly box on the shoulder and jumped up. "Never mind," he said. "Now we've gotta figure out what to do next." With that he stepped right out into the street without looking.

With a yell, the Actor sprang to his feet and pulled him in, just as a small sports car nearly brushed against the Pirate's hip.

"Damn!" the Corellian remarked. "Are *all* your vehicles dirtbound?" Then he turned to his rescuer. "*Now* who wasn't Thinkin' First?" he asked. "Ya could've been killed too, ya know." His expression was hard to make out in the dark, but the Actor could have sworn he caught a smile. "Thanks," the Pirate said simply.

They walked on for a while, cruising in and out among drunkards, dog-walkers, colorful immigrants and even more colorful native couples that were beginning to fill the streets. The Pirate frowned. "I oughta find Chewie. Tell him she's just followin' us around, so there's no point in him roamin' the quays an' parks. No use makin' new plans now; she might be anywhere, eavesdroppin', for all we know."

"Are you going to keep this up all night?" the Actor asked. "Or do I get to sleep somewhere, eventually?"

The Pirate nodded. "You sleep aboard the *Falcon*, of course. I put her in the backyard of a deserted warehouse 'bout two blocks from your hotel, but I think I shall have to find a better place for her. Chewie's worried."

"I was merely thinking," the Actor said, "that I ought to pick up my things from the hotel. I left my case in the lobby after I had cleared out of my room. Maybe I should go fetch it. It won't take long."

The Smuggler seemed for a moment to debate whether or not this man could be trusted; then he nodded. "All right. I'll wait here. But, it better not take long--"

The Actor hurried along the street, back to his hotel. He wondered if the receptionist would remember his talk earlier, about calling for a taxi to the airport. Maybe he had better think up some subterfuge for being still around, just in case--ah, well, most likely they would simply assume he had a mistress in town and wanted to keep it secret. It was all right with him; in a way he would rather they believed that, than suspected he was running around with the captain of a misplaced UFO, looking for an invisible, extraterrestrial girl...

The fans had left. Nobody even looked up as he entered the lobby. Quickly, he made for the stairs and the space under them, where he had left his suitcase.

It was open. As far as he knew, he had locked it, but open in was, nevertheless. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed, though. He had just closed it again, when, looking up, he caught sight of his blue shirt. It was out, walking. The sleeves were trailing a little, but otherwise the miserable garment seemed to be filled to bursting with something. Something definitely inhuman. The Actor swallowed a scream, and sat back on his heels, closing his eyes. He counted slowly to ten, before opening them again. The headless thing was still there, right in front of him. Cautiously, he glanced over his shoulder, back to the lobby. A merrily chatting group of Portuguese had just arrived, keeping the receptionist busy. Good. Turning to the outlandish shape, he said, "Look, it's nothing personal, but wearing my shirts is just one of those things that--" In midsentence he unexpectedly sprang for her, with a vague but wild idea of tying her up in the loose sleeves or something. All he caught was the shirt. He hoped no one had seen him.

"What's that?" the Pirate asked.

The Actor jumped off his bicycle, tearing his suitcase from the packetholder. "I was going to have it sent back to the people at the studios," he said. "It's theirs. Never got the time though, so I brought it along. Didn't want to leave it around at the hotel."

The Pirate looked over the flimsy vehicle. "Fine," he decided. "I take a ride on that, lookin' for Chewie, an' you get down to the *Millennium Falcon*, an' wait there; how's that? Dilapidated building on your right; ya just pass through it, into the back yard, ya can't miss it."

The Actor shrugged. "All right. Be seeing you." He started to walk.

The sound of a tremendous, clattering crash made him turn again, in time to see an angry Pirate crawling out from under the bike.

"How the Sith d'you stay *on* this thing?" he complained. "An' stop hee-hawin' like a boozed-up Tauntaun, will ya?"

Unsuccessfully suppressing his mirth, the Actor helped him up.

The bike, however, got up by itself. And started off down the street. Both men turned, gave each other one, significant look, and started to run.

Ten blocks later, the Actor breathlessly tried to explain to the Pirate the futility of pursuing a bicycle on foot, but the Smuggler--though equally out of breath--just keep running, with a relentless determination which made the Actor suspect that some muleheaded Corellian pride had suddenly entered into the matter. Tired from running with a packed suitcase, the Actor sank down to sit on the sidewalk, his back against a factory fence. He was nearly hit by the apparently riderless bicycle which had turned a corner and was now coming back around the same block again, on the sidewalk this time. With a sigh, he snatched up the case, and started running again.

"You *know* this was a stupid idea, don't you?" the Actor presumed.

The Pirate nodded; not that anyone could see it in the dark. "I just got so darn mad. An' she kept turnin' back all the time; seemed there was a good chance of catchin' her in the end, trip up the bike or something."

"Well, there wasn't," the Actor stated flatly. "And then this notion of taking the subway back--"

"How was *I* to know the damn thing would stop runnin' in the middle of everything?" the Pirate protested. *"You're* the one could've told me, but did ya? Huh? Did ya??"

The Actor shrugged in the dark. "I forgot what time it was. Could happen to anyone. But *this* is downright dangerous!"

"Make up your mind," the Pirate snapped. "Either the subway hasn't stopped runnin' in which case we could take it all the way back to the *Falcon*, or it has, an' we can walk in complete safety along these blasted tracks!"

The Actor sighed. In silence, they continued along the deserted subway tracks.

As the two friends wearily entered the shabby back yard, the Wookiee was already there. He was arguing vociferously with a mildly sober gentlemen who kept asking him questions, completely disregarding his interlouctor's lack of intelligibility.

The *Falcon's* furry copilot was seething by now, and the Pirate muttered, "Gotta get rid of that fellow. It's dangerous for him to be hangin' about so close when we take off."

The inebriated man was leaning against the hull, asking for perhaps the fifteenth time, "But whaz *is* this thing--hup! Ah, be a good shport and tell me?" he implored the Wookiee.

"That," the Actor said, stepping into view, "is a Flying Saucer."

Behind his back, the Pirate slipped up the ramp, to get his blaster.

"Always tell the truth," the Actor commented as they carried the stunned drunkard to safety. "As long as it's unbelievable. Look! There's my bike!"

And sure enough, just inside the entrance to the yard the old bike was leaning against the wall, looking for all the world as if it had never been away, let alone made the town with an invisible rider. A quick search proved unsuccessful; Arouk had left. Or else hidden well.

The Pirate yawned. His copilot walked up to him, putting an immense arm around his shoulders.

"Grrrwhrr," the Wookiee remarked. His captain nodded. "He says we should move the *Falcon* before turnin' in. I think he's right. D'you know of any place where it's safe to hide a starship?"

The Actor reflected that this was in all probability the strangest question he would ever have to answer, reporters' enquiries included. He was just about to laugh and shake his head, when something occurred to him. "You know, it's crazy," he said, "but I think I do. Bring the bike."

"I just remembered," the Actor explained as the genuine *Millennium Falcon* was gently touching down beside her smaller replica, "that shooting won't start until noon tomorrow--today, I mean. Partly it's compensation for some night-filming we did, mainly it's because they're still waiting for some of the props. Meanwhile all the gates are locked, so, if we can only convince the night watchman they have all been drinking, we should be all right. Still, as I said, we'd better be out of here by noon."

The Pirate nodded thoughtfully. His Terran partner had explained everything to him as well as he had had the time for, and of course the Corellian knew of film-making from his own galaxy, but still, this seemed awfully confusing. To put in that much work for a 2-D picture? He did not quite get it. And how could they have a replica of the *Falcon*? For that sure was what it looked like. The Actor had been oddly evasive about what

was being filmed here. Oh well, he was too tired now to care about anything at all. Telling Chewbacca to assign the Earthman a place to sleep, he left for his own quarters. He barely had time to kick his boots off before collapsing across the bed.

Morning light was glaring into what had once been designed as Navigator's quarters, converted into storage for thermosuits and other life-support gear--and now hastily reconverted into the *Falcon's* guest cabin.

The Actor looked at his wristwatch. It said 9:10. He was sitting on the edge of his improvised bunk, his electric razor in his hands. There was no sign of any recognizable power outlet in the cabin. It had just struck him that extragalactical freighters might not be equipped to provide the corresponding voltage to Earth-type razors. With a sigh, he got out, and headed for the cockpit.

He found the Pirate already fully clothed and fresh as a daisy, which was slightly amazing in view of how little he must have slept.

"You wouldn't by any chance have a razor to lend me?" the Actor said.

His host, who had been absorbed in some charts, jumped at the unexpected greeting but collected himself and turned around with a smile. "Sure," he said, flinging the Actor was looked like an immense, deadly sharp clasp-knife--fortunately in its 'clasped' state. The Earthman turned it over in his hand, and burst out laughing. The Pirate shot him an astonished look. "What's the matter?"

The Actor looked about him in the FTL-adapted vessel, his eyes pausing at the sophisticated control panel with its all but inconceivably elaborate computers. He thought of the micro-wave oven in the galley, the unique power of the *Falcon's* drive. Then, once more, he regarded the anachronistic shaving device in his hands.

"Nothing," he chuckled, "nothing at all."

On his way out, he bumped into the Wookiee who pushed him aside with an impatient grunt, nearly flattening him against a bulkhead.

The Pirate gave his copilot a puzzled look. "These Terrans are an odd species, what the Sith was he laughin' at? Chewie--ya don't think--that rumor could've spread all the way to this part of the Universe?"

"Grrmph-wmnn?" the Wookiee wanted to know.

"Oh, ya know the one I mean. The one ol' Lando planted about me ages ago, never expectin' anybody to believe it of course, but somehow it stuck--ya know what they say." He made a face. "That I--shave with a blaster."

In the morning sun the Actor was leaning against the alien freighter, enjoying an early cigarette. He had just unloaded the bike and parked it by one of the offices, and at the moment he stood quietly appraising his place of work of these months past; something he never had the time to do before. It did not look like much on the outside, but on the inside it was filled with men's dreams, crazy, colorful, incompatible dreams that clashed jarringly against each other until one day they had dissolved into harmony. There was the Desert set, the Swamp set, the Snowscape set, the Ocean. Not to mention, the various costumes: Wookiees, Jawas, Ougluks, Shimpzers and several undefined Aliens. There was the Exaridian Dragon, and yes, there was the doll of Yoda, the tiny Jedi master.

The Actor jerked upright from his leaning position, suddenly and brutally brought out of his reverie. For Yoda was not seen with his inner eye only. A chill traced his spine, as he spotted the little three-foot doll come drifting his way a good four feet off the ground, and with an oddly intent-looking smile on its wizened face. He swallowed, and understood. So the *Falcon* had had a stowaway last night, after all. With a sigh he flicked away the butt of his cigarette and went in to tell the alien captain they still had a problem.

Oddly enough, Arouk did not shed Yoda's form, but merely dodged and hid among ever stranger shapes and constructions, as Earthman and Corellian raced side by side through the empty sets, in hot pursuit. Now and then she disappeared, given away only by a high-pitched giggled which could have been Yoda's own.

Her two pursuers burst upon the submarine scene of the Ocean set, and stopped, facing each other.

"It's eleven already," the Actor panted. "Only an hour to go. Less, if somebody's early."

The Pirate nodded. "I know," he gasped. "You have a funny way of measurin' time, but I can tell we're runnin' out of it. Your sun's risin' fast. Any ideas?"

If the Terran had any, he never got the chance to say so. A very true-to-life imitation of a giant octupus dropped right between them, followed by the ten-foot foam rubber seaweed with many intricate and surprising protrusions; and the chase was on again. Only, this time along separate tracks. The tangled seaweed had managed to split them up, and now there was no telling which way Arouk had gone. The Actor ran on for a short while, before he admitted to himself the futility of it, and stopped. He had reached the entrance of a murky passage, and he knew that if he ran in, he would stand a poor chance indeed of finding Arouk--or his way out again, for that matter. In that darkness anybody could be invisible. He glanced at his watch, uncertain what to do. Half past eleven. Perhaps they had better--just then he caught the flicker of a movement in the dark, and heard a teasing giggle. That tore it. He spun around with a curse, and set off down the darkened passage. Running full tilt over the unseen floor, he found out too late how cluttered it was, as he tripped over a heavy box and came down flat on his stomach, hitting his head on a sharp-edged object. What little light there might have been in the corridor, vanished without a trace.

He awoke to a searing pain in his right temple and the overhead view of the *Falcon's* quaint ducting. He had the distinct if as yet unconfirmed impression that the freighter was moving. Good. So they had made it out of--he turned his head quickly, realizing his mistake with a groan, even before the wet rag slipped off his forehead. He was on the point of asking how they got out, when he spotted an incredible shape sitting on the other end of the long seat he was lying on, beside a watchful and occasionally snarling Chewbacca. The shape seemed to be made up entirely of ropes, and was also scrupulously secured to the seat with one. From time to time it ventured a meek objection, but on each occasion it was silenced by an animated Wookiee snarl.

"So you finally got her?" the Actor commented. "How?"

"I should've guessed," the Corellian called back from his pilot's chair. "She had spent months with you, before I came; in that cantina she stayed on to dance with you; each time we split up; she followed *you*, an' yet I was too dense to catch on."

The Actor frowned. "What're you driving at?"

"Well, that's how I found her. Lookin' for *you*. I heard ya call out, an' I had just gotten hold of a torch, so I went lookin'. Found ya out cold in the dust, an' her sobbin' at your side, worryin' her heart out, poor thing. She had completely forgotten all about playin' hide-n'-seek, an' even 'bout takin' that stupid doll off of her. Never moved as I bagged her. Moves plenty now, though," he added with a chuckle, on catching a distinct Wookiee growl from behind him.

"Where are you heading?" the Actor asked, viewing the screen with a certain apprehension.

"Oh, I'd just thought I'd drop you off first," the Pirate replied. "Before goin' back to Jabba. I wouldn't have found his daughter without ya, so I figured the least I could do would be to give ya a lift home, since I caused ya to miss your plane."

The Actor groaned. "You haven't stopped to think what people will say if you try to park this bucket in my back yard?"

The Pirate awarded him a benign smile. "Whatever they say, I hope it's in the *Millennium Falcon's* favor. She can be a bit touchy at times." He glanced at the screen, where the glittering waves of the Atlantic were just giving way to a motley shoreline. "Here's your continent now, unless I'm flyin' upside-down, or something. Now, if you just tell me whereabouts you live--"

In the small hours of the morning, the *Millennium Falcon* set down in the Actor's back yard, scattering sleepy fans in all directions, creating waves in the pool and scorching the flower-beds.

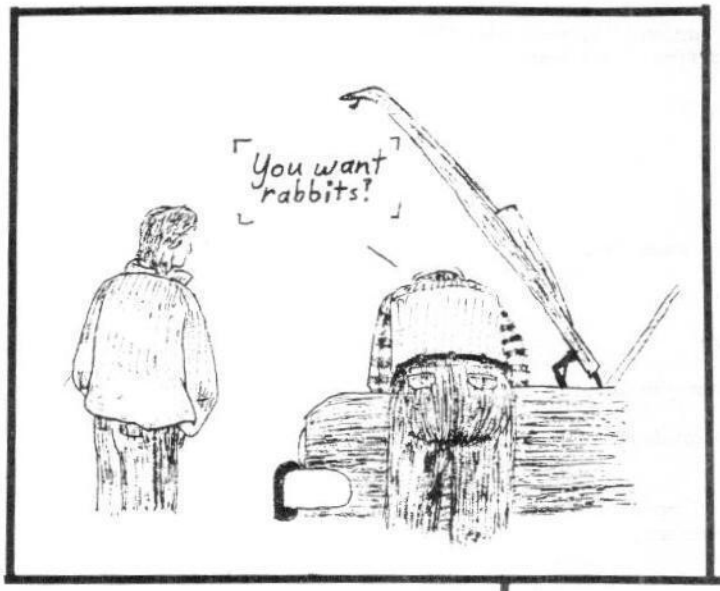
With a sigh, the Earthman offered the Pirate his hand in farewell, but was instead greatly surprised to find himself enveloped in a bone-creaking embrace according to Corellian custom. When the gesture was immediately repeated by the Wookiee, the poor Actor felt like sneaking off in a corner to count his ribs, but he did his best to return the parting squeeze anyway. Then, turning to the ship's invisible prisoner, he bowed lightly. "Been a pleasure to know you, miss," he said. "All things considered."

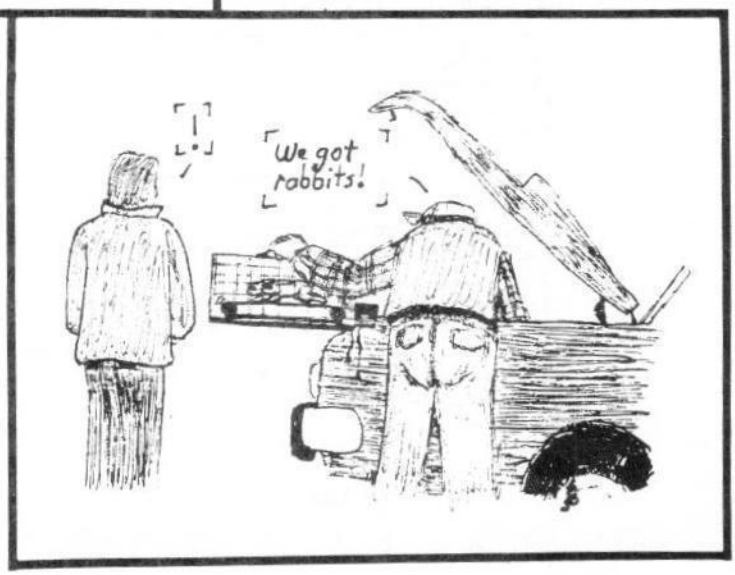
But the only answer the Hut lady favored him with was suspiciously reminiscent of a hiss.

As the Actor walked down the ramp, the Pirate called after him, "Sorry' bout the flowers. But, ya know, for a dockin' bay your garden *is* kinda small--"

And then came the moment for the Earthman to stand by his bedroom window, watching an extragalactical star-ship lifting towards the paling sky, losing herself in a twinkle, as she caught the first rays of a sun yet unseen.

There once was a famous Actor who was prone to very strange dreams...



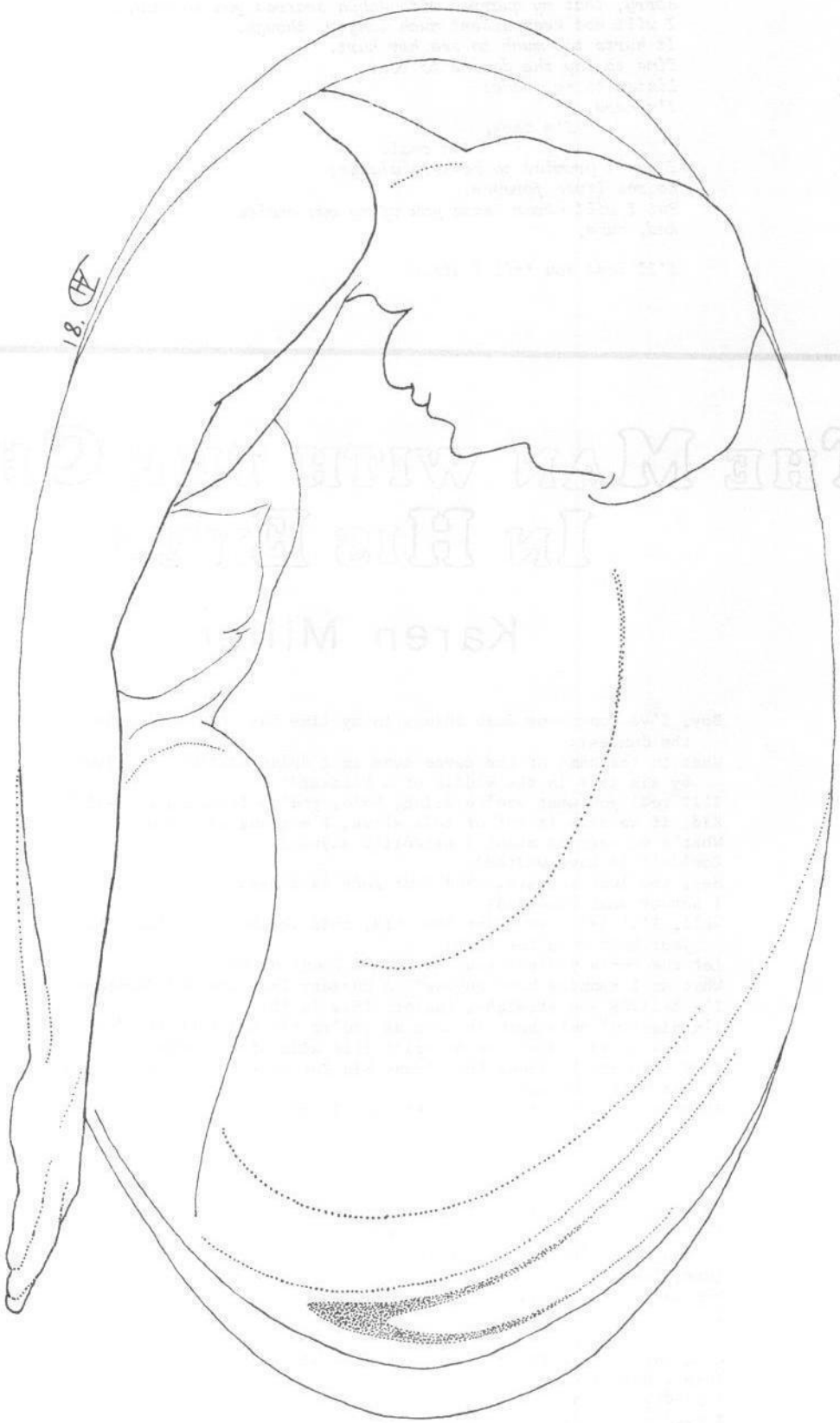


In the Silence at Midnight

Marcia Brin

She woke up again tonight.
Half reached out for me,
but stopped before she touched me.
Doesn't want to wake me up.
Just wants to make sure I'm there.
(Always does *get me up, though.*
A lifetime of living in a human jungle
gives you a fighter's senses, I guess,
even when you sleep.
But I never let her know.)
She's been doing this almost every night we've been together.
It hasn't been that long that I've been out of the Medcenter,
and only a month before that, I was rescued.
From my old pal.
(Ungrateful bastard, that Jabba,
when you think of all the money I made *him over the years.)*
She still worries.
Not during the day;
at night,
when the dreams come,
riding on the wings of the fear and the pain she lived with,
all that time I was gone.

Awake, she's banished them.
But they're not dead, yet.
And they haunt her sleep.
Sometimes, she cries,
still asleep
and I hold her,
trying not to wake her,
'til she knows I'm there.
Mostly, though,
she wakes up and checks.
To convince herself it's over,
and I'm back.
Made me realize how bad it was for her,
those two months,
never knowing if I was alive or dead.
Or hurting.
(Gods, was I ever hurting!
Still *have to be careful how I move.)*
I remember waking in the Medcenter,
not long after the rescue--
when I was still half-dead,
unable to move or speak or think too clearly--
and seeing her there, alone.
She was crying,
her eyes haunted,
and holding me,
fiercely,
so hard I thought she'd break something.
I wanted to touch her,
tell her it was all right,
and soothe that look away.
I couldn't then;
I haven't now:
she's never told me about the dreams,
the waking up,
she doesn't want me to know.
It embarasses her,
to be so...
"foolish".
A proud lady,
my lady.


18.

She doesn't give in easily to pain,
or admit easily to weakness.
A lot like me.
Ah, Leia,
I'm sorry,
sorry, that my quarrel with Jabba scarred you so badly.
I will not keep silent much longer, though.
It hurts too much to see her hurt.
Time to lay the demons to rest.
Listen to me, babe:
I'm here,
I'm back,
I'm real.
I can't promise to be here always;
no one lives forever.
But I will never leave you of my own choice.
And, babe,

I'll love you 'til I die.

The Man with the Child In His Eyes

Karen Millèr

Boy, I've done some dumb things in my time but this has to be the dumbest.
What in the name of the seven suns am I doing sitting in a four by six tent in the middle of a blizzard?
I'll tell you what you're doing, Solo, you're freezing to death!
Kid, if we make it out of this alive, I'm gonna kill you.
What's so special about a meteorite anyway?
Couldn't it have waited?
Hey, you look so pale...and your face is a mess.
I wonder what happened?
Well, I'll tell you right now, kid, this is the last time I haul your butt outa the fire.
Let the Force protect you, but don't count on me!
What am I running here anyhow? A nursery for retarded farmboys?
I'm telling you straight, junior, this is it!
I'm blastin' outa here as soon as you're fit and then it's memory lane if you wanna see me again this side of the grave.
I've been stuck around this loony bin for nearly three years now and that's enough.
This is the last, the very last time I save your worthless hide, you hear me?

Ah, *crafed*. Who in hell am I kidding?
This is me, you're talking to, Solo. Fool them if you want, but don't try foolin' yourself.
Luke, Luke...
You can't die on me.
I...
I...
Come on, you coward, say it. You need him.
Luke I need you.
I need your smile.
I need your laugh.
I need what it is that makes you so special.
You stop me from being a bitter and twisted old man.

HAWKS 81©

Chewie knows.
Chewie understands.
Him and me, we're brothers, we're pals.
But you --- you flyin' farmboy!
You *are* me!
You're what I used to be before and you can't die because if you die, I'll die.
And I don't think I could take that.
Hey, kid, you're so still.
I can barely see you breathin'...

Hey, Force! Force!
You hear me, Oh all powerful mystical energy field?
If you're so strong, why don't you help Luke here?
If it's faith you operate on, hey, you can't fault him.
Or Kenobi.
Kenobi, you old fossil!
Luke reckons you still hang around, poking your nose in where it ain't wanted.
Can you hear him? He's calling you.
Why don't you help him?
I'll tell you why. You don't exist. It's all a big lie.
Come on, damn you!
He's dying, why don't you help him, Kenobi?
Go on, help him! Help him!
Please.
Help him.
Because I can't.
I can't.

Boy, I've done some stupid things but I can't for the life of me think of anything stupider than camping out on a Hoth night.
Well, praise Kiah it'll be the last night I ever spend on this misbegotten ice cube.
When we get back to base, I'm shootin' through like a breeze, kid.
And you can have the lot and good luck to you.
You can have the rebels, and you can have your squadron and you can have your precious princess.
Huh! Her Royal Worshipfulness. Who does she think she is anyway?
I know what I'd like to do to her...!
I *know* she likes me, I just know it!
Why won't she admit it?
What does she think I'm gonna do, bite her head off? Laugh at her? Throw it back in her face?
'Why, Han, I don't know what you mean'. I'll bet she doesn't. Boy, that girl is colder'n a Hoth glacier.
Well, I'll be well rid of her.
I'll be well rid of the both of you.
Who needs you anyway?
I don't need anyone. I can take care of myself.
Me and Chewie, we'll get by.
And you, your Alliance and your snooty little princess can all rot in hell for all I care!

Oh, shit.

CONCEPT: Happy Nuttall
ART : Lindsey Nuttall

I Do?

Lindsey Nuttal

illustrated by Dot Sasscer

Han shifted from one foot to the other. He struggled in front of the mirror to button the top button of his ornate white and blue uniform.

"Do you need help?" Luke asked, laughing.

"Ah, how do I get myself *into* this?" Han turned to let the blond man attend to his collar.

"Getting cold feet?"

"Nah." Han fidgeted and pulled at the collar once it was buttoned, as if it choked him. "Not really. Maybe. No! I know what I'm doing."

"Y'know, I've never seen you so nervous," luke leaned back against the wash counter, resplendent in his own dress uniform of a royal blue jacket and white pants.

"I'm not *nervous!*" Han practically yelled as he stood before the mirror trying to force his unruly hair into submission. He finally flung the comb down and turned to Luke. Yes I am, kid." The Corellian was actually a bit pale. "I'm so nervous you'd think was was gonna be executed or something."

"Hold still," ordered the young Jedi.

Han stood at fidgety attention while Luke looked him over. The Commander gave a tug or two at his companion's jacket tail, smoothed the shoulders down and stepped back.

"You look fine." He picked up a light blue baldric of state, the same shade as Han's cummerbund, and slipped it over the Corellian's head. As he adjusted it to fit beneath one arm, Han look a deep breath and let it out slowly. He stared out the frosted window, gathering himself together.

Again Luke leaned nonchalantly against the wash counter. He smiled at the Corellian's back. "If you really want to ... disappear," he said, folding his arms, "you can trust me not to tell anyone where you are."

Han looked over his shoulder at the boyish face, his brow wrinkling in astonished outrage.

"As a matter of fact, I'll be happy to stand in for you," offered the young commander.

"Over my dead body!" the Corellian shouted. "I never ran from anything in my life ... "

Luke's mouth flew open, but before he could say anything, Han caught himself.

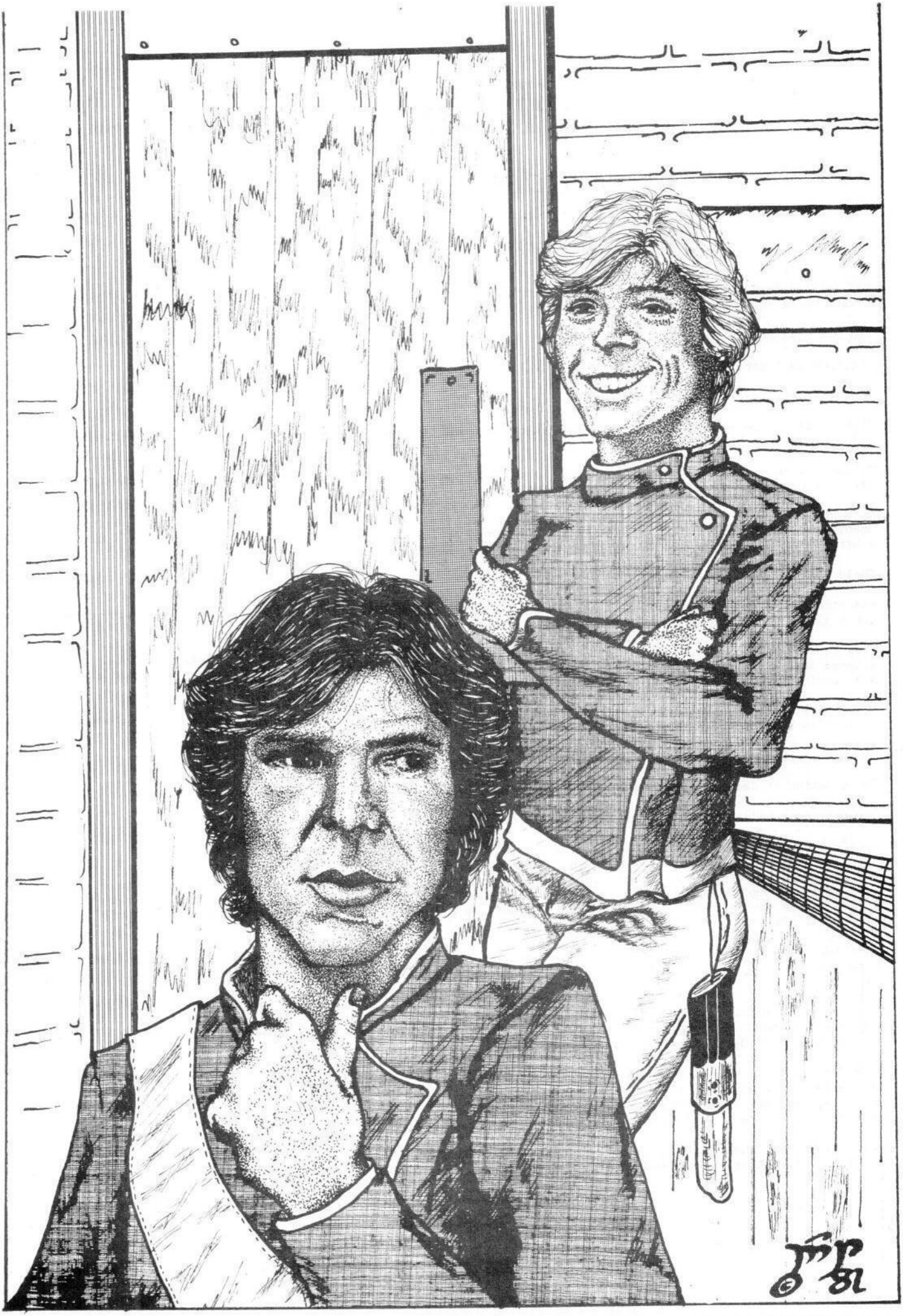
"Well, almost anything. If you think I'd do that to Leia, you can just think again." He started to turn away, hiking his cummerbund up and rumpling his jacket, but he swung quickly back. Shaking a warning finger at the commander, he continued, "And I oughta deck you for thinkin' what you're thinkin' about doin' if I did."

"I'm not real sure what you just said, but I get the idea anyway," grinned Luke. "But I think it's time to go out. That is, *if* you're going?" Opening the door he bowed and mockingly motioned the Corellian out.

Han shot out the door, snarling as he went. Guests were everywhere. Hundreds of them. Han plowed through them until he made it to the back of the huge hall. He craned his neck to see inside, past the giant open double doors separating the foyer from the main hall.

"Hey!" he yelled. "Who did that?" He pointed to two signs set up just inside the doors. Guests who hadn't paid attention to them before took notice and began to laugh. One had an arrow that pointed to the right and a caption that read, "Family and Friends of the Bride." The other had an arrow pointing to the left and the caption "Scum and Villainy."

Luke burst into laughter. Chewie appeared from the left side and put a hairy paw on the sign. He pointed at it with the other paw and made amused noises.



The Corellian was beside himself. "You good-for-nothing, mangy, misbegotten .... " he yelled, waving one arm at the signs. "Get those out of here before Leia sees them."

A fanfare blared from within the hall.

"Whoops! Your cue, Han ." Luke gra-bed his arm and dragged him past the chuckling Wookiee.

"I'll get you for this Chewie! You just wait!" the Corellian shouted before assuming a very strained decorous mien.

Luke walked beside Han and the Wookiee fell in behind, escorting him up to the raised dias in the front of the hall.

Leia had descended the stairs from her dressing room on hearing Han's music. She entered the foyer they had just quit with her cousidns and maids following. She wore a white gown trimmed in the same sky blue as Han's baldric and cummerbund. There was so much fabric and it was so light it floated about her like a cloud. She wore the tiara of delicate silver wire and jewels that was her right on state occasions. A sheer veil of blue was draped over the tiara to fall to her breast in front and waft several feet behind her. It made her look as if she were enveloped in a pale blue glow. As her retinue formed about her, she saw the signs and shook her head as the people nearby laughed and giggled.

Suddenly the foyer doors were thrown open by two men in the royal livery of the reinstated Emperor of the Republic. Two more marched in before a man Leia had only seen once when she was a small girl, and recently on video. Leia gasped and curtsied as low as any of her cousins and maids as the Emperor swept by. She gaped in astonishment as he gave her a nod and a smile. He was white haired but tall and straight. His brown eyes were bright and his manner commanding. For a moment it looked as if he might pause, but Leia's music had already started and her cousins were trying to get her to rise and get going, so he hurried on. He did stop and read the signs. Laughing with his guards, the Emperor motioned them to the left. Leia flushed in embarrassment. Luckily His Majesty seemed to have a sense of humor.

Leia saw as she entered the hall that there had been no room on either side. And there had obviously been some overflow from the bride's side to the groom's, judging from the crowns and uniforms. She saw that several people had moved to five the Emperor and a few of his guards seats. The other guards remained at the back of the hall.

Why, she wondered, would the Emperor honor her wedding, unless it was meant as a gesture because of the destruction of Alderaan and her father's death. Perhaps he meant to make a presentation to Luke. That would indeed be an honor, to have Luke recognized by the Emperor at her wedding! Then, as she gave her hand to Han, she forgot all about who might be in the congregation.

She had another surprise coming shortly. As the High Justice asked for their vows later in the ceremony, he called Han to answer first. "Do you Hanovrian Tarlendas Aroundel, known to many here as Han Solo, take this woman to be your wife and treasured lifemate?"

Leia looked at Han in surprise. She had to stifle a giggle, the name sounded so incongruously pompous. She should have known better. Of course, he had probably been using an alias all these years. Still, he could have told her beforehand. And that name rang a bell in the back of her mind. She'd heard it recently, but at the moment certainly couldn't remember where. Perhaps he had told her and in the near hysterical flurry of preparation for the royal wedding, it hadn't sunk in yet. At the moment, she didn't care what his name was, as long as he said yes. All her attention was centered on the man at her side as he answered.

Han looked at her as he did, shrugged an apology, then suddenly grinned so wickely that she could only wonder what deviltry he was plotting. Then she forgot about it as the High Justice turned to her.

At the end of the ceremony, when Han lifted the gauzy veil and kissed her, someone in the hall lifted his voice in a cheer. Not exactly etiquette, but the hall rang with other voices as they made their way out.

They were escorted to the reception hall where they had to meet their guests. However, instead of going to the doorway where they were to welcome the incoming horde, Han directed her to a group of people who had preceeded them and evidently were not going to go through the line.

"What are you doing?" Leia asked. "Not everyone will go through the line. They can see us later."

"I know, but there's someone here you need to meet. I didn't tell you about him sooner because I wasn't sure if he was going to make it. Reasons of state and all that. Anyway, I wasn't sure how you'd take it."

"What? Who ... ?" She knew something was up by the smug look on his face.

He took her elbow and guided her through the crowd of people. "Here," he pulled her to a halt. "Leia, I want you to meet the Rightful Emperor of the reunited galaxy, His Royal Majesty Alaric Malferian." He grinned widely as the Emperor reached out and grasped the stunned Princess' limp hand.

"Pleased to meet you, more than I can say," the older man smiled in a very familiar way.

"You can call him Dad," said Han.

"What?" Leia clutched the Emperor's hand in a reflex action and went as white as her dress.

"Uh," the Emperor patter her hand with his free one. "That's the hand I sign important papers with. Please don't break it."

"Han," Leia begged, "you're kidding? This is one of your embroideries, right? His Majesty is just helping you put me on, isn't he?"

"Oh, Leia," Luke said as he walked up. "I see you've met your new father-in-law. Sir," he bowed.

"He's not kidding." Leia's voice was flat. "Is he?"

"Now, Leia, would I kid about something like this?" Han was enjoying himself immensely.

As Leia opened her mouth to explode, the Emperor stepped in. "I think you two had better get your reception line started before everyone gets too impatient. The line has been standing there for a few minutes now." He gently pried Leia's hand loose.

Han led her to the doorway. Leia was still trying to gather her wits.

"If you keep looking like that," Han leaned over to whisper in her ear after the first of the people had gone by, "it'll give me a good excuse to say you feel overcome by the excitement and take you off to our ... chambers."

Leia glared at him, then nearly smirked. She straightened up and began paying more attention to her manners. "I'll get you for this," she muttered out of the corner of her mouth.

"I certainly hope so," he murmured back, causing her to flush a furious scarlet.

After a few moments she asked, "Does ... did everyone really know except me?"

"Know what?" He smiled at a highly coiffed and bejeweled lady who was saying something about having known the Princess since she was 'so high'.

"Come on, Han. Why didn't you tell me who your father was?"

"First, for reasons of safety, for you, me, my family, during the Rebellion. Couldn't have anyone getting captured and spilling the beans about my whereabouts to the Usurper or Vader." He kept smiling and shaking hands, growing more and more impatient with all the to-do by the moment. "Second, well, I didn't want to spend the rest of my life wondering if you'd married me for my title."

"For your ... !!" Leia whirled on him. "Why you conceited, unbelievably egotistical .... " she stammered, looking for words.

"Scruffy looking?" he supplied.

"Oh!" She slapped her bouquest into his hands and flounced away.

Han smiled a force smile at the waiting line. "Uh, she's thirsty. Went to get some punch." He shoved the bouquet into Chewie's paws as the Wookiee ambled up, so he could continue to greet people. His father came over, eyeing the incongruous sight of the Wookiee and the bouquet.

"Looks like the little lady has quite a temper."

"Yeah," answered his son. "Keeps things real interesting."

"Well, I spent my wedding night on the couch, too. Most of it, anyway, or you wouldn't be here. She'll get over it."

"You got money to put on where I spend the night?" challenged Han. "Is that a bet you really want to make?"

"Now that you mention it, no."

"Then mind your own business, Dad."

"Oh, of course, son," his father smiled, eyes twinkling. "You know, your brother told me what you planned to do."

Han tensed. "Oh? Colerian wasn't supposed to do that until we had a chance to talk to you together."

"Well, it wouldn't have mattered. You can try to refuse, if you like, but I don't approve at all. Colerian is the younger .... "

"Look, Col's a great statesman. He ... "

"That's not the point!" Teh Emperor's voice rose and he flushed. "Sorry," he apologized to the surrounding people. "He could be your advisor," he tried again in a more conversational tone. "You really haven't the right to refuse the throne."

Leia came back over. "I'm glad to see he upsets other people, too. I was afraid it was just me." She nodded to her father-in-law.

"He was just informing me he's thinking of depriving you of being the next Empress."

"Aw, Dad ... "

"Empress?" Leia went pale again. "You mean he's the heir?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so. He's eldest. Too bad his retainer is so attached to him or I might order him -- ah, convinced, shall we say?"

"Retainer?"

"He means Chewie," Has supplied.

"Even Chewie knew?"

"My dear," the Emperor smiled. "Chewbacca has been with our family since I was a child. He was supposed to act as guard for the prince, but from what I hear they did during the Upheaval, I should have his pelt hung from the door of the Hall of State."

Chewie made apologetic and mournful sounds, shrugging his shoulders. Leia giggled at the sight of the blue and white bouquet clasped in the Wookiee's shaggy hands. She releived him of it and returned to her place in line.

"I wash my hands of all of you. Just make up your minds what you want to do and do it."

"If I did that," Han smirked, "a lot of people would think I was a very impolite host."

"What do you want to do?" she inquired, hiding half her face in her bouquet because she knew what was coming.

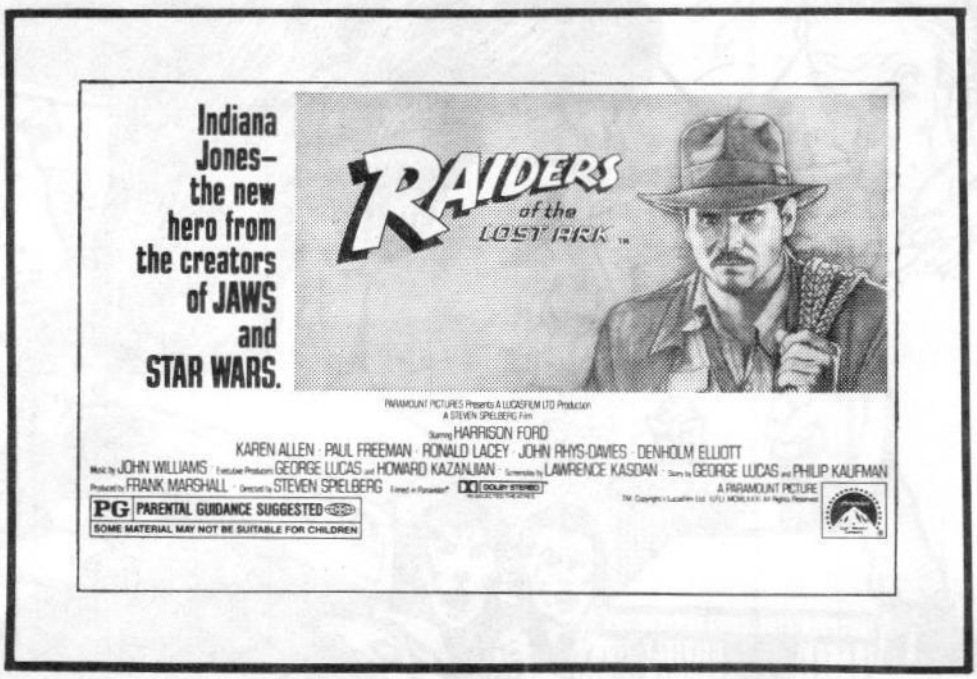
"Leave. Now. Right now."

"Who would really notice if we did, with this huge crowd?" She regarded him above red cheeks, slyly, from the corners of her eyes.

"That does it. Take over, Dad." He grabbed Leia's hand and dragged her through the crowd to the door.

"Chewie," Leia yelled, pitching her bouquet at him . "Throw this for me!"

"How do you do?" smiled the Emperor at the next few guests in the line. "I'm sorry, my son and his bride aren't here at the moment. I'm the Emperor. Will I do?"


Indiana Jones– the new hero from the creators of JAWS and STAR WARS.
RAIDERS of the LOST ARK
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DOLBY STEREO
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE
PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

Partners

Lindsey Nuttal

illustrated by Larry Blake

The drums rolled, a quiet thunder. The guards marched into the square, escorting a youngish officer in the center of the formation. The officer wore the uniform of a fighter pilot with wing leader insignia. He was impecably groomed, as he had been from the first day he had put his uniform on. He had been accused of enormous vanity, and had admitted it with no false modesty, but it was more than that. The uniform was the symbol of his pride in his rank and position, gained through ability, not likeability, though that also had come very easily. Low murmurs came from the crowd as the group marched past. The afternoon was clear and cool, giving no indication of what had occured in the past two days. Very little rubble could be seen from the town square. A small stage, undecorated, had been knocked together beneath the flagpole at the center of the square. Several important military men, including the joint chiefs of staff of the planetary government, sat upon folding stools on the stage. The formation halted before the platform and the guards arrayed themselves in a line slightly behind the man they escorted.

A grey-haired general in the uniform of the Air Command rose. He glanced up at the flag, which flew at half-mast. He held his cap in his hand while he gazed up that the symbol of his system's unity which bore the corner chevron and sun of the Empire. Then he turned to face the young officer. In a gesture which indicated he was about to engage in business with one who was not worthy of being addressed bareheaded, he placed his cap on his head.

"Wing Leader Solo," he began. The crowd fell silent. "We managed by the slimmest chance to avert total disaster. Disaster brought on by your unbelievable, traitorous and damned stupid actions!" The crowd broke into a roar of laughter which quickly became a growl of bloodlust. The general motioned for silence. "Your incomprehensible and unbelievable story could never have concealed your duplicity in instigating the failure of the Parvan peace treaty that was years in the making. It can only be assumed that your maniacal actions were to insure you would be found insane and committed instead of executed. But justice has prevailed."

The young Corellian clenched his jaw. He had said all he could say at his court martial. He refused to give any indication of the turmoil within him. He wanted to shout "I'm innocent! I was trying to save us!" but he already knew it was useless. His runination had been too tightly planned. He had only been a cog in the downfall of his own system and people.

"You already know your sentence, read at your trial, Wing Leader Solo, but I want to tell you that death is too good for you. I intend to see that your name becomes a curse and anathema to every Corellian tongue. Your name will be remembered as the blackest in the recent military annals of our history. If it were left up to me, I'd give you over to the crowd right now!" The roar that greeted this statement caused a surge in the crowd physically as well as audibly. The cordon of guards that had previously been stationed about the square had to unlimber their weapons and re-inforcements moved in.

"However, a military court has seen fit to grant you an easier death before the firing squad. Execution will take place at the traditional hour before down tomorrow, so that you may never look again on the sun that warms that planet you have betrayed." He turned to the drummers. "Gentlemen, if you please." He started down the steps of the platform as the ominous drumroll began.

He stopped before the young officer. As leaned to unbuckle the utility belt, the only portion of his dress uniform Solo had ever worn in a non-regulation manner, low-slung and tied down, the intensity of the drums increased. The general removed the blaster from the holster and handed it to a waiting cadet. He dropped the belt to the ground. The young officer tried not to wince as the first epaul-strap was ripped off his shoulder. His teeth were so tightly clenched that the muscles along his jaw stood out like cords. He was sweating. The other shoulder strap followed, then the decorations, of which there were some few. Solo had been a regular fireball. He could coax things out of his men and machines that no one would have believed. But he had always been defiant and unruly. Now, the general felt, his opinion had been proven true. Solo was a bad egg at heart. It must just have taken the right price to prove it.

"Well rid, now," he thought as he jerked the buttons from Solo's dress tunic one by one.

As the stripping progressed, the hurt anger in the brown eyes of the officer was slowly replaced by an unfathomable, emotionless gaze. Everything was dropped into a pile on the mosaic stones of the square, his cap on top. The balster was handed back to the general. He very methodically charred the little pile to ashes. Then he removed the energy cartrige from the blaster and, dropping the casing to the ground, stamped twice, three times with his booted heel. The casing bent and cracked. He then addressed the guard captain, a stocky, dark haired, squarely handsome officer about the same age as Solo.

"Escort him the the brig. See that he receives no food or water." The captain saluted smartly and reformed his men about the prisoner. The crowd was growling and milling again and the escort was held up for a moment while the crowd control detail cleared a path for them. Solo glanced to the side and saw a girl standing at the front of the crowd.

"Sharay," he said before he could stop himself.

The woman shook her head, the fall of dark honey hair streaked with blond framing her young, pretty face. "You finally did it, Han," she smiled. "You never were very smart, just military. Still I don't see how even you could have believed you could get away with this. What were you going to get out of it?" She looked him up and down, not expecting an answer and the constriction in Solo's throat wouldn't have allowed him to answer even if he had had one. Sharay began to laugh. Solo's buttonless tunic flapped in the gentle breeze. ONe shoulder seam was hanging open where the epaul-strap had un threaded it on being jerked away. His hair, mussed when his cap had been pulled off, stuck out in disarray. When she began to laugh, Solo turned away, his face reassuming the blank look it had taken on during the stripping. The guards marched him away almost immediately. More vioces joined Sharay's in laughter. The ex-fighter pilot did not look back.

Roughly, Solo was thrust into the cell atop a fur blanket overflowing one of the two bunks. The other blanket leaped up with a roar of rage. Solo was tossed onto the other bunk and the blanket resolved itself into a huge Wookiee. As Aldonno locked the cell with a sweep of the sonic key the Wookiee made a grab at him. Aldonno jumped back laughing.

"It's becoming a regular zoo in here. At least now we've got all the animals in one cage. And you'll have company, Slick. This was found on one of the Parvan ships digging into a drive engine. They couldn't get anything out of him and didn't much care. They think he's wanted by the Imperial police, but figure they won't give them any argument if he's executed along with you as a spy. We should get along well under our new treaty because of you."

"Because of you, you traitor!" yelled Solo, coming off the bunk in a flash.

"Me? Oh, no. You've still got it backwards, Han. *You're* the traitor. You destroyed the original treaty and murdered General Odrin so it would be your word against mine. Only I found you in the General's office."

"I found you going through his papers."

"It'll be our little secret. You were a fool. YOu should have joined us instead of going for Odrin's crazy plan to expose the Parvan's truce as a takeover. But it worked out even better than the Parvan's had hoped. Now the treaty's made over with all the benefits on Parvas side. See you, Slick."

Solo grabbed the bars of the cell so hard his knuckles showed white. "I'll get you Aldonno."

"Ha! No you won't. You'll be dead, that's what you'll be. And I'll have a promotion, your wing fighters, your girl..." He shut the exit door on his last words.

Solo slammed his fist into the bars and raged about the cell for a few moments before throwing himself on the bunk. The Wookiee had leaned up against a wall to watch the human, trying to decide if he was dangerous. Finally deciding the man was not going to immediately do anything for which he might be squashed, the Wookiee turned his attention to examining the cell, which is what he had been interrupted at when the guard brought the human in.

After a few moments Solo noticed what the Alien was doing and sat up. "You might as well forget it," he snorted. "I've been in here enough times for infractions as a cadet to know you can't get out."

The Wookiee paid him no more mind than to rumble a little.

"Say, why don't you turn on your translator?"

The Wookiee turned and spread his arms to reveal not a box, a strap, or a pouch on his furry form.

"Great," Solo leaned back against the wall. "Why couldn't they have at least captured somebody who could speak Standard?"

The Wookiee saw the human had lost interest hand returned to his examination. He eventually stopped moving around a stood in the middle of the cell. He woofed a couple of times to get the man's attention. Solo looked up and the Wookiee pointed to the air vent in the ceiling and made a few inquiring noises.

Solo laughed. "You might as well forget it, pal. You'd never fit that carcass of yours through there. And the bolts are sunk into the ceiling. Why don't you take a nap or something. You're beginning to wear on my nerves and they're bad enough as it is."

The Wookiee growled at him and, reaching up to hook his hairy fingers in the grid over the vent pipe, he heaved a couple of times, swinging all of his considerable weight from the small square of metal. With a crunch and a shower of crumbling formastone, the grill ripped away.

"Wonderful," commented Solo. "We have a hole in the ceiling. Now what?"

The Wookiee gestured at the hole with one paw and at Solo with the other.

"Aw, c'mon. Even I can't fit through that." But he walked over to look at the hole anyway. He had already decided life wasn't worth much anymore, but the basic instinct that had kept him alive despite his escapades so far wouldn't let him give up completely. "Nope," he said after mentally measuring the duct pipe. "Can't do it."

The Wookiee whimpered and made hefting motions with his hands, then reached up to scrable at the edges of the hole, trying to enlarge it. It only went to the edges of the pipe, so that didn't help.

"It won't work, I tell ya. Anyway, everybody and I mean everybody knows my face now. We'd never manage." He started to turn away when the Wookiee's hairy paw fell on his shoulder and spun him around. Gathering up a couple of pawfuls of tunic and shirt, the alien pulled the man's face to within an inch of his own hairy visage and roared.

"Well, if you're going to insist, I guess I could try."

The Wookiee released him. Solo began to strip his ragged tunic off.

"Hey, Oh Great Furry Intelligence," he queried. "Even if I get out through there what are you gonna do?"

The Wookiee pointed at Solo, then out the window. Then he made a circular motion with one hairy finger parallel to the floor and pointed to the door to the office.

"Huh?" The human just looked at him.

He repeated the pantomine.

"Oh. Oh sure. I'm supposed to crawl out through that mousehole, walk around the guardhouse without being seen by the guards, waltz into the office and ask the duty officer politely for the key to let you out. Right."

The Wookiee nodded his shaggy head, indicating that, basically, that was what he had in mind. He also indicated with a crushing motion of one ham-sized hand what could be done with the guards.

Solo had started to fold the tunic out of habit. He stopped in the middle of the motion, staring at it. With a shrug, he tossed it to the floor.

"Sure," he said, looking up at the hold. "I'll come back and let you out." He lifted his arms. "Right after I take care of a little business," he muttered as the Wookiee lifted him effortlessly upward. At least until his shoulders stuck.

"Ow!" he yelled. "Hey, take it easy, I ain't fittin."

The Wookiee pushed harder. With another yelp of pain and the loss of a little of his shirt and skin, Solo was thrust through the hole. The Wookiee shifted his grip, giving the pilot just enough time to get his upper body angled into the turn of the pipe and then pushed again. Solo stuck again at his hips with the same results as before. He yelled, the Wookiee pushed harder and the man was now in the duct. He could barely move. He would have to pull himself along with his arms alone. He couldn't bend his legs. As he started to inch his way down the duct, there was a tug at his boot. He could barely hear the big alien rumbling in a half-threatening, half-pleading tone with his own body blocking the air shaft.

"I told ya, I'll try," Han shouted back.

He was already sweating in the confines of the tiny pipe. Shortly, he was soaked through. Every time he moved forward the scrapes on his sides worsened. The sweat was turning them into streaks of fire on his skin.

I hope I'm headed in the right direction, he thought as he squirmed alone in the darkness. The tiny tunnel seemed interminable. *How long is this damned thing, anyway? I could have sworn it was only a hundred feet or so to the side of* ...Ow! He had given a forward heave and rammed his head right into the grillwork at the end of the duct. The swift Corellian night had fallen as he was inching through the pipe, so he had seen no light coming through the wire covering to tell him he had reached his goal.

"Well," He brushed at the numbed spot on the top of his skull. "I guess that's one way to knock it loose. Might as well get started."

He hooked his fingers in the wire and began to work it back and forth with as much force as he could muster in his cramped position. Luckily, one corner was already missing a screw, which gave him a starting point. Also, lucky for him, the gridwork was not powered. The brig was one of the two oldest buildings at the Corellian Imperial Academy and had not yet been modernized. Prisoners, it was reasoned, did not need the comfort or aesthetic uplift of an updated, redecorated building. The brig was the last edifice on the remodling list. The brig was installed mainly for discipline, anyway. Corellians rarely took prisoners.

Solo shook and jerked the metal square until his fingers were bloody and ragged. His shoulders and arms felt like leaden weights. When he finally managed to get a second screw out, so the screen would swing down to be held only at one corner, he had to pry the grid wires out of his swollen and bleeding flesh before it could do so. His hands had pretty much gone numb, so they didn't hurt as bad as they had at first. He pulled himself out of the pipe, dragging first his heels, then his soles on top of the pipe until he could duck his head and turn his body so he wouldn't land on his head. He landed on his back instead. Most of the wind was knocked out of him, but, at least, there was grass instead of forma-stone beneath him. He lay there for a moment, conscious of his throbbing hands, his spinning head and the fact that at any second a guard could pass the corner of the building and see him. Finally he pulled himself up against the side of the brig and pushed off. Once he got going, he recovered quickly.

He headed for the back of "A" quarters. There was a section of fence there that had been modified by Cadet Solo several years before in order to make liquor runs after bedcheck. The hole still existed. The secret had been passed on to only a select cadet or two a year, passed on like a legacy. Once the tales of Solo in action after he had graduated from the Academy not so long ago, got around he was even more idolized by underclassmen and upper alike, much to the chagrin of the Academy. Solo knew that Aldonno and his cronies and the Parvan contact would be at their favorite spot, The Red Star Inn.

Probably drinking me good riddance, he thought to himself as he slipped through the fence. *I hope he's not ready for this.*

The few times he'd been seen doing this as a cadet at the Academy he was never informed on. For one thing, he had been something of a hero to his classmates and younger cadets. He was by far the best pilot and battle flight tacticion at the Corellian branch of the Academy. And, with his brash, reckless actions and fresh mouth, he was also the biggest thorn his superiors had ever had in their sides.

I bet they're all glad to see me go. He indulged in a little self pity. *After I did what I knew was right, they claim I started an interplanitary war and get set to shoot me in the morning. If I ever get off this system alive, Corellia can rot for all I care. And everybody on her.*

The righteous anger got the adrenalin flowing in his blood again. The thought of strangling Aldonno with his bare hands was the most delightful thing he could imagine at the moment. He soon saw the lights of the Red Star. Positioning himself in the darkness, he whistled up a street urchin hanging around outside the cantina and gave him instructions.

Inside the Inn, Aldonno and several of his companions were discussing the probability of Aldonno being promoted to Wing Captain and being given Solo's wing. They were interrupted by a kid who must have sneaked past the bouncer.

"Hey," he called, "is one of you stripes called Aldonno?"

"Yeah, me," answered the man in question. "What's it to you, brat?"

"Now, is that nice?" the boy responded, wiping his nose on his sleeve. "And after the lady told me to give her message to the nicest guy in the house."

"Lady? What lady?"

"The one waitin' outside, across the street. Pretty. Said she wanted to talk to you real bad."

"This lady give you her name?"

"Yeah. Sharay."

Aldonno rose amid the leers of the other men at the table. "Thanks, kid." He tossed the bou a coin. "Don't try to spend it here. Get lost before you get thrown out. Go home, if you have one."

"Yes, sir. Always a pleasure to meet a nice person like you, sir." The urchin gave a mock salute and disappeared into the crowd, headed for the back door.

Aldonno went out the front, pausing to let his eyes adjust to the darkness. He saw a figure standing against the building across the street, just out of the circle of the street glows. He sauntered across the street, his hands in his pockets.

"Sharay?" He squinted into the darkness. "What do you want? I've done my par ... "

A fist took him square in the mouth, snapping his head back. He staggered back, spitting blood.

"I told you I'd get you, 'Don. So get 'em up. I'm gonna leave you a grease spot They're gonna have to identify you by your buttons."

Another punch staggered the surprised officer, but his fighter pilot training took over and kept him on his feet. He tucked his chin and came back swinging. The engraged Solo got a hefty right to the jaw and was knocked backward, but not down. giving the other man time to set himself.

"How did you get out? No, don't tell me. Another of the Great Solo's magic tricks. Well, you won't get off the planet, Slick."

"Maybe not," grunted Solo as he swung and missed, "But I'll die happy, knowing you're gonna be at the gate of the seventh hell to meet me, 'Don."

The fight became silent except for the meaty sounds of fists on flesh. Aldonno was larger and heavier built than his opponent, but he hadn't a prayer against the well-honed speed and phenomenal fighting instinct of his adversary. Solo had already beaten Aldonno at nearly every physical game played at the Academy, and there were many, all designed the strengthen the fighting skills of the cadets. The third time Aldonno went down, he stayed there.

"Get up," panted Solo after he'd regained his own balance. His hands were bleeding again and not all the blood on Aldonno's face was his own. "Get up or I'll stomp your head where you lie."

"Sorry, Slick," gasped the downed man. "Can't make it. Looks like you'll have to commit another murder, instead of having it a fair fight."

"Get up or ... "

"Hey!" Aldonno suddenly yelled.

Solo looked upt to see several men coming out of the inn across the street.

"Over here! It's the traitor, Solo. He's escaped!"

Solo jumped over the fallen man, kicking the restraining hand away from his leg. As axhausted as he was, he ran until his lungs felt as if they were on fire. He stopped in the lee of a building near the port. He could see it from where he stood. The side on which the Academy lay was bright with lights. The alarm had been raised there. He knew he could never make it through to let the Wookiee out.

Every man, and Wookiee, for himself at this point, he told himself. *I am sorry, though. He was pretty smart for a Wookiee.*

A transport rumbled by with the port delivery service markings stenciled on its side. Almost without thinking, the pilot leaped for the rear gate of the slow moving vehicle. His arms were so tired and sore he nearly lost his balance. Trembling with the effort he heaved himself over the tailgate. The transport was stacked with long, rectangular boxes. He pried the lid off one using a piece of stray metal bar that remained in the bed of the transport from a previous cargo. He reached into the synthetic packing straw and pulled out the smooth, cylindrical object he felt.

"Well, well, what have we here?" he murmured to himself. "Looks like a brand new Mark IV Heavy Duty Blast Rifle , Military Issue. Packed in an unmarked carton. Looks like someone about to do a little gun-running to some backward or proscribed system. Hope they're charged."

He began digging out the rifles from the box he had opened and tossing them over the tailgate. By the time the transport reached its destination within the port, the only evidence that one crate now carried a different cargo from the others were a few stray wisps of packing straw. Inside Solo hugged the rifle he had kept to his body and tried not to suffocate. The transport was apparently driven by a labor droid. Solo could hear a youngish male voice, very muffled by his present surroundings, giving orders.

"C;mon, get started. They go in the back of the ship . Quint will show you where. And quit worryin', Quint. All we have to do is meet Mettie in Senus at the Two quid House, collect our credits and we can leave the Hymal system behind forever."

"What if we have trouble, Hobie?" a voice that sounded as if he came from the bottom of a veyr deep well asked. "We don't know that he'll show up alone. We're just two. He could bring .... "

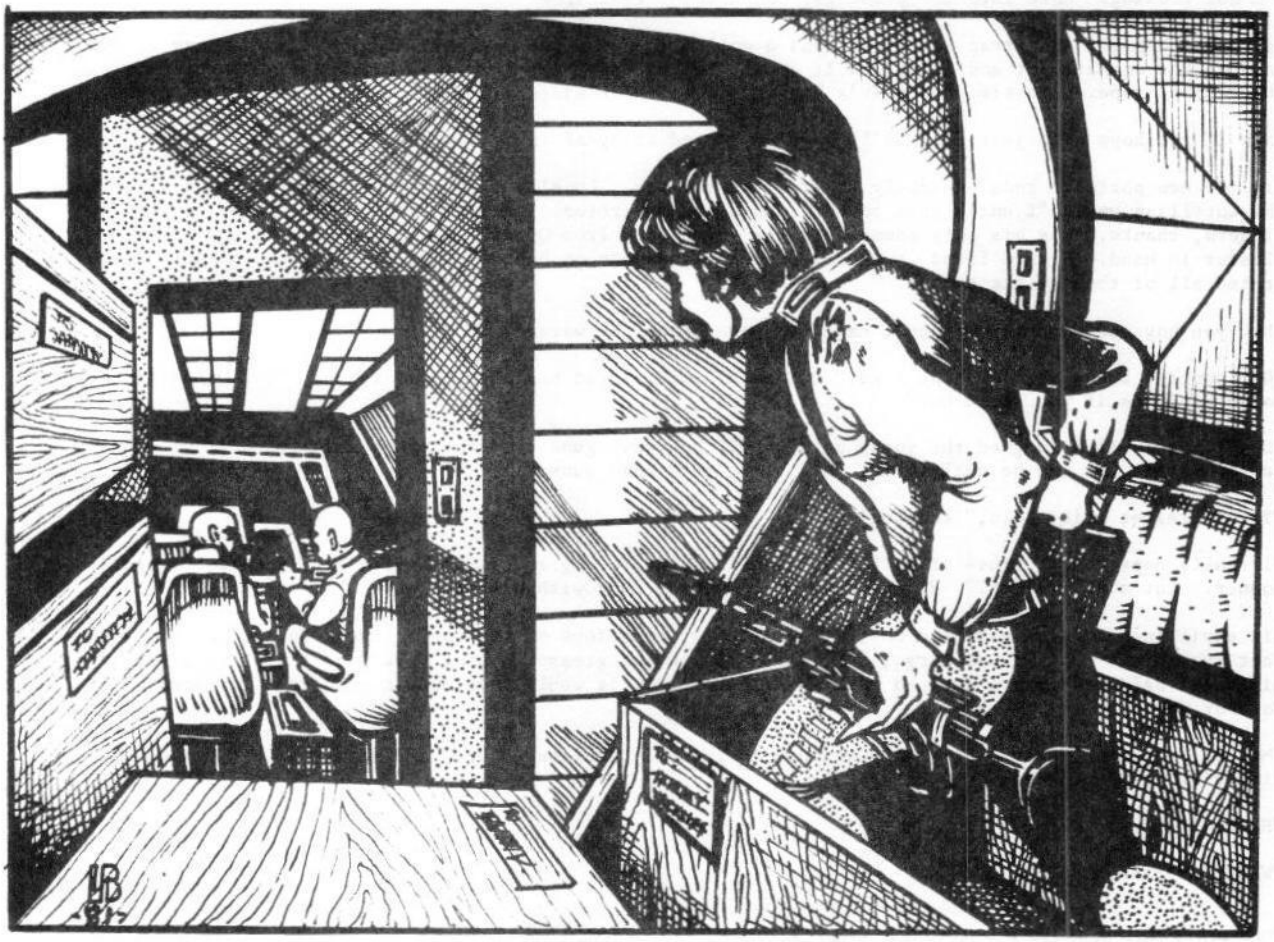
"There won't be any trouble! Now stop whining and help the droid. I researched our client very thoroughly . He's okay. Now move it!"

"Don't get mad, Hobie. I only ... "

The conversation faded away. Shortly thereafter the crate Solo was in was pulled from the transport and thumped down inside the ship. *I hope this is a self-contained hold,* the pilot thought. *If it ain't, this is gonna be a real short trip for me, and those guys are gonna have four crates of guns and one of protein jelly when they reach this Hymal.*

The takeoff, aside from leaving him breathless (he hadn't realized he'd been holding his breath, waiting for the relentless push of g-force to crush him) was uneventful, which meant he'd been exceptionally lucky yet again.

"Somebody up there must like me, off and on," he breathed as he gently pushed the cover off the crate. He was surprised to see he wasn't even in a hold. The ship he was on was apparently a passenger lighter, not a freighter. The crates had simply been stacked in the little passenger compartment. He could see through the open door into the control room. The two pilots were sitting bent over the controls. Carefully he clutched the rifle and slipped out the door.



"It won't take us long to reach Hymal," the youngish voice was saying. It issued from a short, stocky bald personage who seemed to be reading from the com terminal. "All we have to do is tell the barkeep we're looking for Mettie to make a delivery, then wait for him to show up." Hobie looked over at his co-pilot revealing a craggy, hairless face.

"I don't know, Hobie. It just all sounds like a holo-thriller to me. I don't think we're gonna get enough money from this for it to be worth the risk we're taking."

"I certainly hope you get paid well," interjected the Corellian.

"What!" both pilots exclaimed, turning to look at the barrel of the blast rifle now pointed at them.

"Just move slow and easy and you won't get hurt, boys." cautioned the Corellian. "I may even let you split the profits from your little venture fifty-fifty with me."

"Never!" cried Hobie, lifting his short, considerable bulk from the pilot's chair. "Who are you, you maniac?"

"Just a fellow who needs a ride, and a few credits. And you two are fellows who need to keep cool heads. That way you avoid getting them splattered all over the interior of your nice, clean ship."

"You can't get us both," Hobie said, tensing.

"Want to bet?" grinned Solo "Go ahead. Try it. You'll just fix it so I get all the profit, and your remains get spaced."

Hobie relaxed.

"Please, Hobie," pleaded Quint. He turned out to be as tall as the Corellian but he had blue tinted skin, overlong limbs and digits, and possessed eyebrows that feathered up to his hairline. Solo didn't know his species, but he suspected the eyebrows were actually sensory organs. "Us alive is more important than getting any amount of money." He bit his lip unhappily. "Okay, so now what are you gonna do?"

"First off, I think I'll make sure you boys don't take a wild notion to toss me out into the vacuum when I'm not looking. Move into the passenger compartment real slow."

He made them sit and strap in. There was a coil of spare wires for emergency repairs hanging on the wall of the compartment and he pulled it down. Several of the tough wires twisted together made a good unbreakable rope. He tied the pair's hands down to their sides and their ankles to the chair legs.

"Now if you boys will just relax I'll have us docked at Hymal in no time."

His two new partners rode unhappily the rest of the way. Luckily they only had to miss one meal because the Corellian wouldn't untie them to eat and adamantly refused to feed them. "I'd prefer to keep my fingers, thanks," was his only comment on the suggestion from Quint. Once docked, Solo untied them, blaster in hand. He had found two of the compact weapons on board, as well as a vibro-blade. He secreted all of them on his person.

"Now you boys be good and we won't have a messy scene," he warned.

"Our contact knows what we look like," Quint informed him in his sepulchral tones. "You won't be able to do business if you shoot us."

"Don't bet on it," laughed the young pilot. "If he wants guns from the black market, he's not gonna be too particular who he deals with, just so he gets some guns."

"You'll regret this, Solo," snarled Hobie.

"I really hope not. 'Cause if it looks like I'm going to regret it, I'll make sure you two regret it sooner. Let's go, fellas." He motioned them out the door with his blaster.

His unwilling partners gave him no further trouble, conscious of the gun on their backs, until the contact showed up. Mettie was large, fat, grey skinned and greasy looking. He wore a tiny skullcap on his slick bald head and a striped robe that looked like it would have made a good tent for someone like Solo or Hobie.

"Me and my partners here are really anxious to get this deal sewed up." smiled the pilot, hoping his sincerity was convincing.

"He ain't," said Quint.

"What?" Mettie asked.

"He ain't our partner," continued Quint doggedly, nervously watching Solo place his hand obviously on the blaster under the table and shake his head in warning.

"Yeah," Hobie joined in. "He's running from the law. Could have gotten us picked up and lost your cargo. He thinks he's going to hold us up for half the profit."

"Now," sneered Quint, "what are you gonna do?"

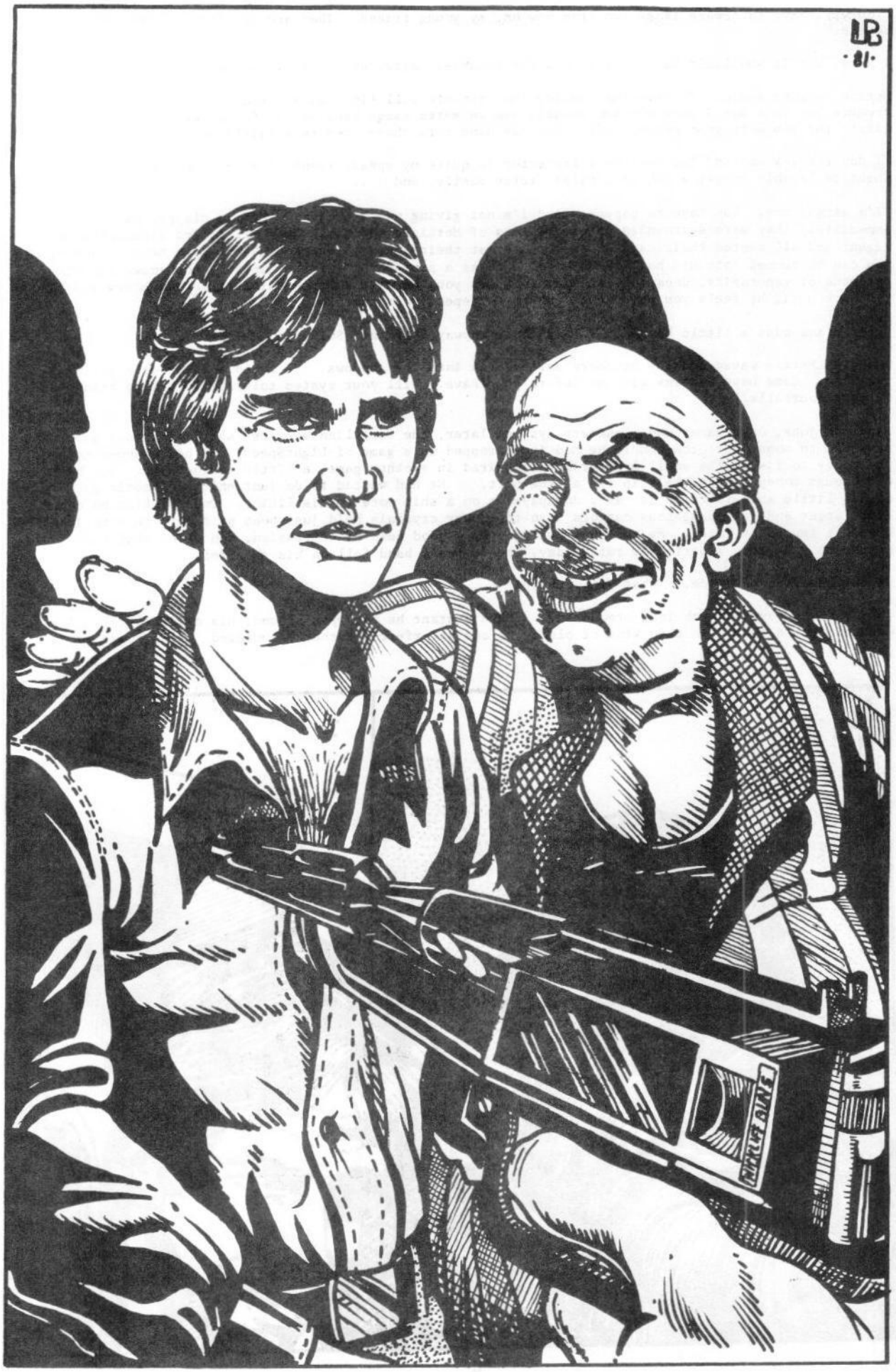
Mettie stared at the two partners and the tense Corellian for a second. Then he began to laugh. He laughed until his bulk shook and he wheezed for breath. He wiped a tear from his eye and reached over to slap Solo on the back.

"Ho! I always did admire a man with more gall than he had a right to. Sounds like you've made a good deal to me, Mr. Solo."

"You can't ... you don't mean to .... " spluttered Quint.

"Of course I'll honor the man's presentation. Hmmm. Ha-hmmm," he chuckled. "Reminds me of when I was younger and more agile. I only engage in my transactions myself now as a matter of business etiquette. I have others to do my field work for me. You have the makings of a fine 'trader', my boy. I will permit your partners to depart with their ship and half the profits, as they have said that was your deal, but I'm sure an enterprising young man like you can find a way to get where he wants. Even if he must use a few of his profits to buy passage. You can't remain here. You would become competition much too quickly for me to let you stay. I don't allow competition here." He chuckled some more. "Let's go view the cargo."

As the lighter with its two greatly disgruntled occupants lifted, and Solo tucked his credits in his belt pouch, Mettie cautioned him.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"You will have to beware those two from now on, my young friend. They are the type to take you from behind."

I know, but it shouldn't be too hard to avoid trouble. After all, this is a big galaxy."

Mettie laughed again. "I have the feeling that trouble will find you all too easily. Come. Let me introduce you to a man I know who can usually use an extra cargo hand on his freighter. He will most likely let you work your passage off. You may hang onto those credits a little longer that way."

"I don't think workin' low hand on a freighter is quite my speed, thanks," responded the Corellian. "I ought to be able to get a job as a pilot pretty easily, and .... "

"I'm afraid not. You have no papers. And I'm not giving you a choice." Mettie clapped his hands and immediately they were surrounded by plug uglies of Mettie's species. They all looked singularly unintelligent and all rested their hand on the blaster at their hips. "You can take the job he will offer, or you can be dumped into his hold to be discovered as a stowaway . If the Captain, not known for his patience or generosity, does not immediately space you, he will most certainly take you money and make you work until he feels you have done enough to repent your mistake."

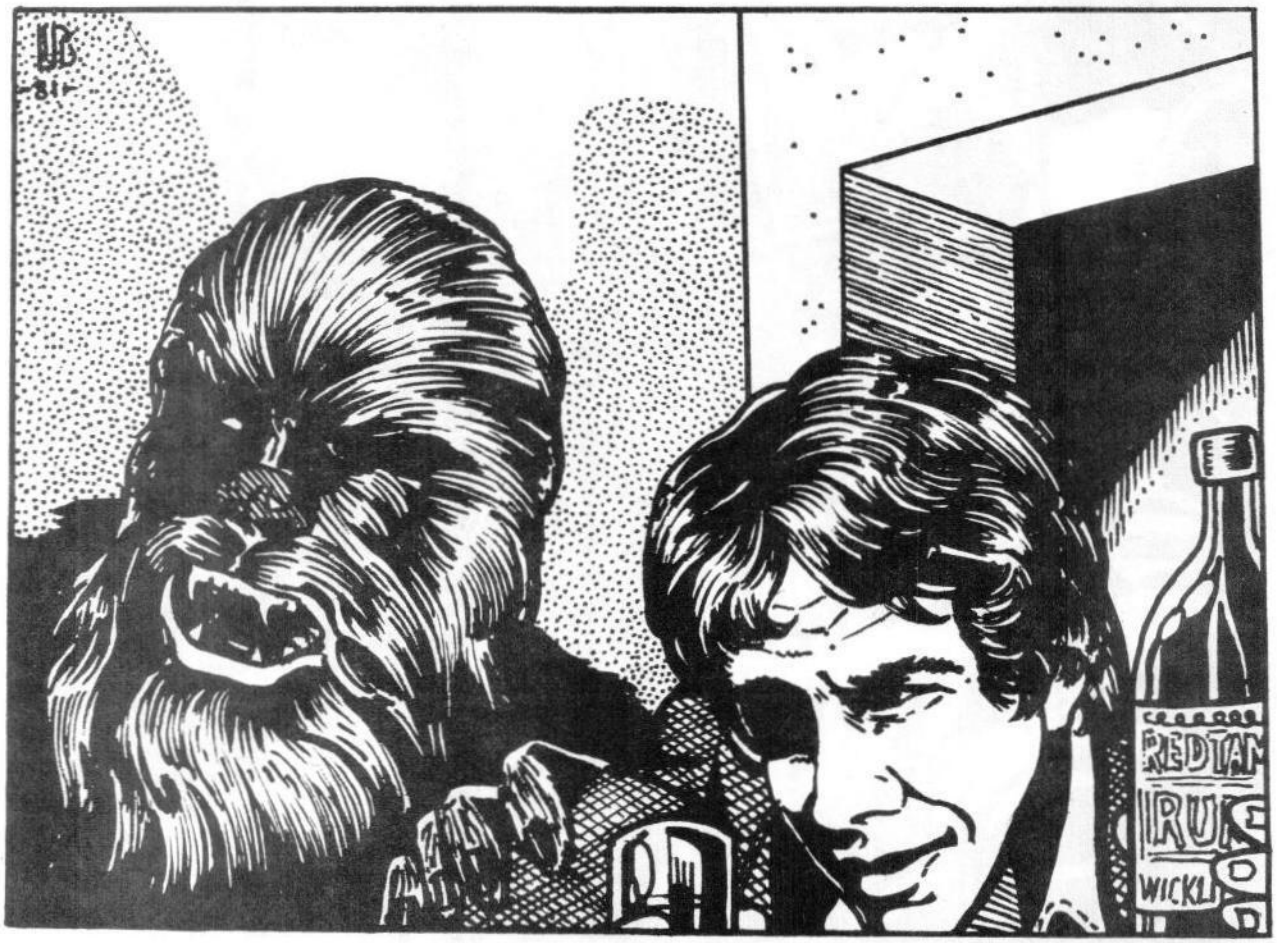
"This place awas a little backward for my taste anyway," grinned Solo.

"Good." Mettie waved and the bruisers melted back into the shadows. "I could see you were an intelligent man. Come have a drink with me before you leave. Will your system tolerate Kyrillian brandy and sulphur sourballs?"

Many odd jobs, card games and planetary systems later, the Corellian was just settling into a good seat at a bar to moon over the bundle he had just dropped in a game of LightSpeed. He had planned to use the money to fix up the small lighter he'd acquired in another game, a little rougher one. Now he hadn't enough money to pay the slip fee at the port. He had wanted to do just enough cosmetic surgery on his little ship to trade it as a downpayment on a ship more to his liking. One in which he could haul larger and less dangerous cargoes than the power crystals he'd just been paid for, only to drop the bundle a few hours later. He was just building up a good head of depression, wondering what else could happen to make this a perfectly rotten day, when a heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

"Yeah?" he glanced aside. "What'ya .. uh-oh!"

The hand was covered with long brown hair. In an instant he was spun around, his drink flying. A space cleared around them. In this kind of place, no one interfered, rather encouraged. Bets began to be called out.



"Ah ... hi there." The Corellian tried to smile. "How are you?"

The Wookiee roared in his face and grabbed the front of his jacket.

"Wait! Hey, wait!" yelled the pilot as he was lifted into the air and flung against the front wall of the bar. He started to climb back up from the floor, wondering if he could get his blaster out and fire before he got his neck broken. "I can explain if you'll give me a chance."

The voice of the insectoid barkeep broke in. "To raise thy manipulative members above thy sensory clusters," he hissed.

The sound of a charging flash rifle caused them to do as they were told. The bar emptied in a mad scramble of beings. Without the bodies in the way Solo could see why. In his upper set of limbs the barkeep held a sawed-off flash rifle. The shortened barrel had been flattened down into an oval. This caused the energy beam, when fired, to splay out. It would cover quite an area instead of the usual inch or so spot.

"To take thy senseless argument into the street. To never darken the door of my establishment again or to consign thy spirits to the cold hells of Sishu. March!" The barkeep motioned with the rifle, bracing his secondary arms on the polished surface of the bar.

The two combattants stepped stiffly out the door. No sooner had they cleared the doorstep than Solo cut and ran. With a bellow of rage, the Wookiee leaped after him.

"Ssavachesss," hissed the barkeep as he replaced the rifle beneath the bar.

While Solo had a little bit of a lead on the Wookiee, he knew the alien's long legs would cut the distance in a very short while. He zig-zagged between buildings, hoping to lose the Wookiee, but discovered the shaggy being was already so close he couldn't shake him. He didn't want to have to shoot him. After all, the Wookiee did help him escape the brig and probably thought the Corellian had deserted him on purpose. He managed a fleeting moment of wonderin how the Wookiee had gotten out on his own. He clapped his hand to his holster as he heard the pounding of the bit creature's feet closing in. The three stormtroopers about seventy-five feet away froze for a second. Solo took advantage of the time to turn and run the way he had come. He ran right into the surprised Wookiee's arms, and was received with a howl of glee.

"No!" he yelled as the furry giant started to squeeze him. "Stormtroopers. Run!"

Unsure, the Wookiee stopped squeezing but did not release him.

Ineffectually the man pushed at him. "Run, you dope!"

The clattering sounds of fast moving armor from around the corner decided the Wookiee. He turned and hotfooted it, Solo straining to keep up. The man sudden cut into an alley, yelling, "C'mon, my ship's this way."

As the troopers opened fire, the Wookiee followed. Evidently the troopers had decided it was worth finding out why these two were so eager to get away from them. In the middle of the alley, the Wookiee over took the man. Without breaking stride, the alien tucked Solo under one arm and gave a prodigious leap upward. Solo yelled out one curse, chopping it off short, then shut up. The Wookiee caught the bottom of an upper dwelling platform balcony and pulled them up as far against the side railings as he could . They hung there for a moment or two. Shortly the troopers clattered beneath them and out the other end of the alley. The Wookiee dropped to the ground and set the man on his feet.

"Nice trick," panted the man as they took off again. They slowed before they entered the central port gate. They strolled nonchalantly through it, eyeing the guard at the sentry box warily. The com link went off in the box.

"Let's walk a little faster," suggested the Corellian.

"Hey! You two!" The guard came dashing from the box, reaching for his gun. "Halt!"

The Wookiee and the man whirled, firing nearly simultaneously. As the energy bolt from the blaster blew a smoking hold in the formastone as his feet, and a solid slug from the Wookiee's bowcaster sang by his ear, the guard dived back into the senty box. The two fugitives ran for the docking slip. They lifted off with a scream of unwarmed drive engines and the blare of the port alarm around them.

Solo glanced at the monitor and cursed. "They're coming after us. You'll never fit in the gun tube. It was designed for a human. Can you fly this thing?"

The Wookiee, jammed uncomfortably into the co-pilot's seat, nodded. He grasped the controls, rumbling and whoofing to himself.

Solo climbed the tube to the small top mounted spin turret. It was designed for mounting in smaller, human ships. There was enough room for the gunner's body and that was it. The gunner fitted his feet into stirrups at the bottom side of the tube and hung on to the firing butts. Then entire tube rotated in a 360 degree plane with the ship's dorsal surface. The arc was manually adjusted along 180 degrees.

The very first patrol ship to run within range was blasted the first shot. The Wookiee whooped and threw the lighter into an immediate overhead loop, putting Solo's gun directly over the other two patrol pods. The ex-fighter pilot took one of the swiftly dodging little ship out in three quick shots as they sheared away from the lighter. The Wookiee completed the loop and spun the lighter through several rolls to avoid return fire from the last patrol, who was now running scared. The Wookiee threw the lighter around to pursue when Solo yelled, "Let 'im go! Let's get out of here! They'll probably already be launching more pursuit. Heavier duty, too." He tumbled out of the tube and threw himself into the pilot's chair. As he punched up the coordinates preparatory to going into hyperspace, the Wookiee turned the little ship around and headed it away from the system as fast as its modified little engines could go. Solo looked over at the Wookiee and grinned.

"That was pretty nice flying, pal."

The Wookiee looked smug.

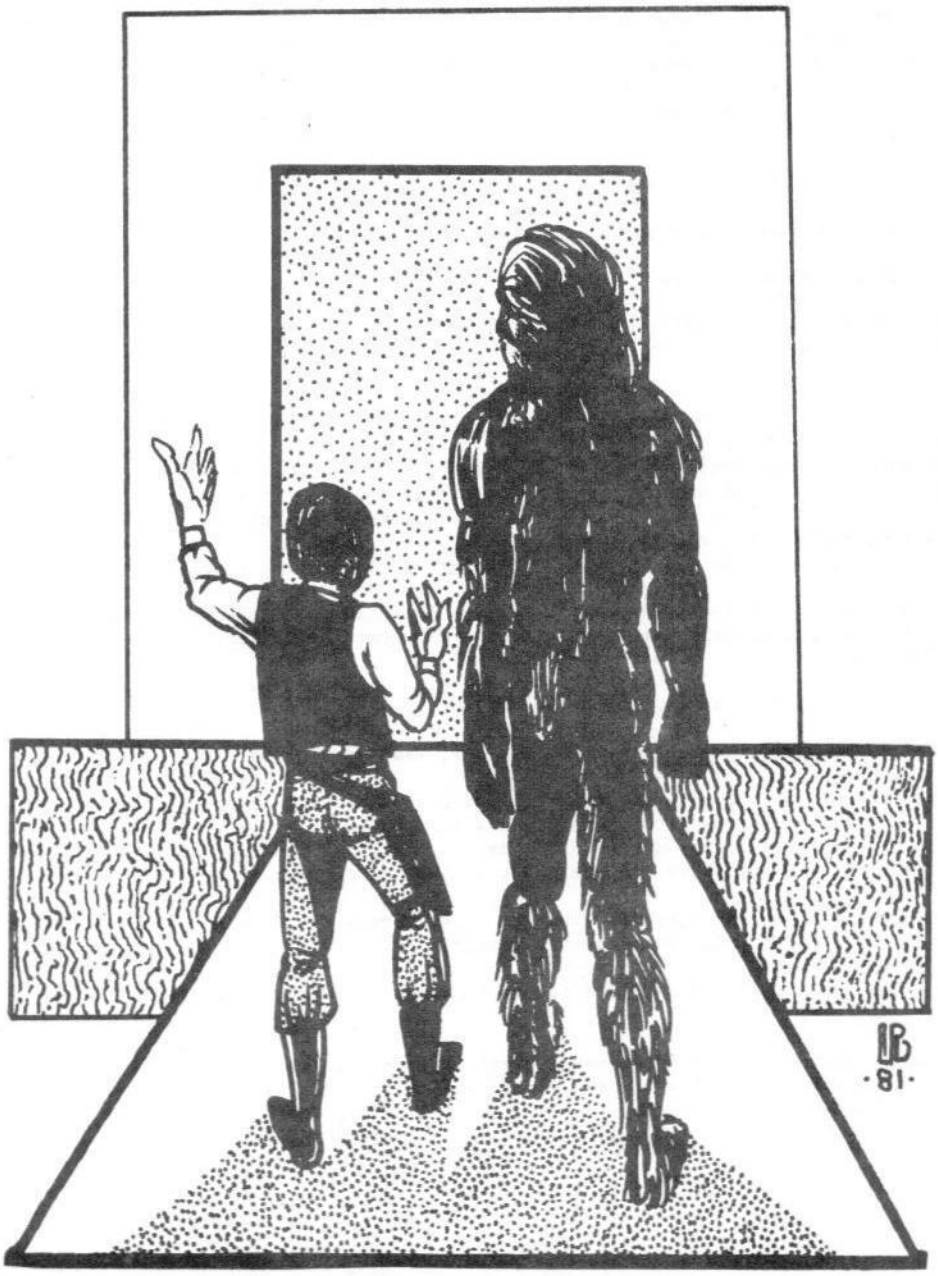
"Y'know, I could use a good co-pilot."

The Wookiee barked and made angry noises, shaking a hairy fist at the Corellian, "Hey, gimme a chance! I'll explain why I didn't get back to let you out as soon as we go light speed." He locked in the coordinates and poised a hand over the control levers. "My co-pilot would be a full partner, y'know."

The Wookiee made unsure noises, and the human half-smiled. "We seem to work pretty well together, so far. Just think what we could do as partners."

The Wookiee muphed to himself a couple of times, then with a grudging rumble he nodded.

"Great!" The Corellian grinned again as he pulled the levers down. "But one thing for sure. If you're going to stay, we're going to have to find a bigger ship."



My Diary
1926 A. D.

Marion Ravenwood

Written by Martie Benedict

With Embellishments by Frank and Martie Benedict

Excerpts from a Diary
Summer - Fall 1926

June ~

Friday ~ Well, Diary, school is over for another year, and none too soon for me. I want a long, lazy Summer stretching ahead of me, full of promise ~ promises of what, though? I wish I knew what I wanted. Half the time I want to laugh, and half the time I want to cry. Or my muscles are all tight and I have to run and run until I drop. Do we all have to suffer like this to grow up? Do you suppose if Mother were alive she'd have an answer for me? Surely not Father! Tonight Father is giving a small reception for his new research assistant, his prize pupil, I think, although I don't recall seeing him before. He is called, picaresquely, I think the word is, Indiana Jones and I will bet a Rudy Vallee record to anything, Diary, that Dr. Jones is either fat, bespectacled, or both and congenitively unable to discuss anything more modern than the Fall of Rome.....
Phone's ringing ~ more later ~

Saturday 1:00 a.m.

Would you say I'm a big enough person to admit to a mistake? OF COURSE! And, Diary, All my Rudy Vallee records are yours ~ Dr. Jones is nothing like what I'd expected. First of all, he drove up in a DUSENBERG! I swear it looked as long as the University football field, and behind me Father was clucking like he does when I've done something outrageously extravagant, but he was smiling, too. And, oh but Dr Jones is BEAUTIFUL! Tall, and ever so trim and fit! His hair is a scrumptious brownish gold (a bit long, too) and his eyes ~ Goodness! Listen to me gush! ~ his eyes are wonderfully shaped. And when he smiles (which he does often) they

crinkle up and positively twinkle. Later when we talked he told me I must call him Indy which is what his friends do, and he said he hoped WE would be friends. Diary, he is so magnificent ~ he must be nearly twice my age and so sophisticated and clever. What could he care for a schoolgirl? ~ SIGH ~ But I will be his friend if he'll have me. Oh yes indeed!! It is close to 2:00 a.m. now. I tried going to sleep, but found all I could do was hug myself and smile up at the ceiling in the dark, so I'm writing to you, my best and only confidant .....

Wednesday ~

Indy ... Indy ... Indy ~ just the sound of his name makes my heart leap and I want to laugh. I saw him today downtown, on the far side of the street just walking by, and I felt weak and terribly excited all at the same time. If he'd seen me and spoken I don't believe I could have answered. But he didn't. Is this the proverbial CRUSH??

Monday ~

I overheard Father say Indy would be doing some work for him at the library, and I contrived to meet him there as though by accident. He asked me if I were interested in archeology as, naturally, I had positioned myself in that section and I lied and said, Yes, very much ~ I was hoping to make it my career. Could he possibly believe me?? I stood there in my lisle stockings and neatly braided hair, parroting phrases I'd picked up from Father. Am I hopeless? I wish he would touch me ... And yet when I imagine his hand against my cheek I feel hot and quite strange as though I were blushing all over. Diary, did you know it is possible to blush all over? It is ... I looked.

Saturday ~

I have solved the problem, Diary, I touched him first. Yesterday afternoon he came to see Father, who dispatched me to fetch the professor a glass of lemonade (which he accepted without much enthusiasm, but with good grace). I let my hand stay on the glass just a shade too long and our fingers touched for a second — GALVANIC!!! I have NEVER felt like this before, so aware of another person, so sensitive to his presence ~ Indy is like a drug, but one that, instead of numbing the senses, heightens them to an almost unbearable level! We were standing in the back garden, the three of us, and the sun was heavy and hot and there was a rich growing scent all around. I closed my eyes for a second and it was easy to believe that all the warmth came from him ...

Thursday ~

Diary, I want him to see me as something more than a child. I sense that he does, sometimes ~ or am I just blinded by my feelings? He seems to watch me with a peculiar look, speculatively, although he is never more than cordial...

July ~

Wednesday ~ He took me driving today. I contrived another accidental meeting, this time on the quadrangle (a good bit of timing on my part!) and he offered me a ride home. But instead of home, we drove out beyond the edge of the city where the fields are deep green patches among the trees. He took my hand to help me out of his car, and then he didn't let go. We walked together a little way off the road. I couldn't swallow. He must have felt how my hand trembled. It is PAINFUL to

be so ... open ... so exposed to another human being this way! I feel vulnerable and it scares me. My heart hurts ... I want him to DO something, acknowledge me somehow — Die read this back. How disjointed and incoherent I sound! How very like the sheep-eyed school girl he would never want — He said he wanted to show me something, and in a split second the most amazing parade of fancies flashes through my mind, but it was only a whip, an old braided leather thing. He laughed and said he wanted an audience for this expertise, and I dutifully watched, although I was puzzled at first. He could take dead branches off trees with it. Then he took some bottles out of the back of the car and lined them up on a fallen log and shattered them one by one. I was mesmerised watching his body twist in the sunlight, muscles flowing, and the way he stood, legs spread, everything about him tight and alive and the whistle and crack of the whip and the sun flashing off his hair and the shattering glass and he turned suddenly and sent the whip arcing toward me — but gently ... slowly, and I couldn't move and it wrapped itself around my waist tight and he pulled me to him, laughing, and then he wasn't laughing any more, but he was looking at me and I was afraid and so excited by his nearness I could scarcely breathe and I thought NOW! NOW! OH PLEASE NOW! But he just smiled and sort of sighed and looked up over my head, beyond me, and after a minute he said, "You're a very good sport, Marion, to put up with someone like me." And while I stood there like a fool, not knowing what he meant or what to say, he uncurled the whip and then he drove me home ... If for no other reason, Diary, this day was important because I finally know what I want. I can't hide from myself any longer. I want him

to make love to me...

Sunday ~

It's going to happen, I know it now. I can see it in his face, in the way he looks at me. We have a shared secret, he and I, and there is a delicious intimacy between us that is all the more exciting when we are with other people... I was taking dictation from Father and Andy was prowling restlessly around the study. He circled around to the desk and reached for one of the artifacts Father keeps as a paper weight and his fingers slid over the back of my ~~the~~ left hand. When I looked up, he was watching me with just a hint of that crooked smile. My heart was beating so hard I thought it would burst, and I could feel the all-over blush. Suddenly there was nothing but the two of us and I was drowning in those hazel-brown eyes and they seemed to fill the whole world.....

Tuesday ~

... It's like one of those carnival rides that starts out slowly and that gets faster and faster and takes your breath away...

Friday ~

Father is looking at me strangely these days. I think he pities me. He is afraid I'm harboring a doomed passion for Andy...

Wednesday ~

Oh! I hardly ever touch the ground! I am charged with vibrant life and I must GLOW! Every breath is like wine and I am drunk with joy... He called me to help him straighten out his files and as soon as I went in his office I knew. Oh, I knew!! There was no pretense then. He closed the door behind me, and when I turned, his arms were around me and his mouth covered mine and I had never known such pleasures. He wanted me.

I could tell in the obvious way, and what a feeling of power it gave me! To arouse this sort of passion in such a man! I could barely believe it — his tremendous strength and at the same time his need — he wanted ME!! And his eyes — those eyes half closed when he said, "You want this," and even though I knew it was not a question, I said, "Oh, yes, yes," over and over again and he could have had me right there in his office. We might have knocked all the books off his desk onto the floor ... I was crazy with wanting him ... but he took me to his apartment in the middle of the afternoon ... He was very, very gentle ... afterward I was crying and I think he was afraid he'd hurt me, but I tried to tell him they weren't that kind of tears, that something had happened to me so unspeakably wonderful, something unbelievable — a "FEELING" — I don't know! And suddenly I was crying and I didn't know why. And I'm sure he understood (better than I!!) because he held me very close and stroked my hair and there was that lilt in his voice that he gets when he's laughing just a little bit at what he calls my "enchanting ingenuousness" and he said, "I always knew you were a rare flower." He's always one step ahead of me, Indy is. But I know two things now — one, I love him more than anything, and the other is I want to feel that way again. Soon.

Tuesday —

I cannot believe what has happened to me — I am like some beautiful, sensual stranger with talents and capacities and hungers I'd never dreamed of. I am shameless and wanton. As Indy said, "You're wanton it all the time." Oh! This is

glorious — colors are more vivid, lights brighter and I am airborne. I live for his glances, his touch ...

Saturday —

Its a good thing Father is preoccupied with the new term beginning soon, or he would surely become suspicious of my time — my many "visits to the library" and my marathon "shopping trips" .....

Today we took a picnic lunch out in the country. I sat beside him while he drove, just looking, drinking him in — the strong, angular profile, the curve of his throat. Sleeves rolled up ... his forearms were sunburnt to a bronze, and his muscles moved when he turned the steering wheel. I found a terrific pleasure in watching him drive the car, the mastery of his body over the machine... By the time he stopped I was frantic to touch him. I unbuttoned his shirt and slid my hand over his chest. I think I said, "Oh, Andy!" though it may have been just a sigh. He was laughing at me, but his voice was husky when he said, "What will it be first? Lunch, or me?" For an answer I kissed him ... out of the car, beneath a tree he loosened my braids, combed them free with his fingers ... my summer dress is like a gauzy veil ... how vulnerable I feel! And it is wonderful ... I feel every air current, every contour of his magnificent body. I feel my hair brushing against my waist and the insistant pressure of his hands ... I lay across his chest later while he put little wildflowers in my hair, looking so serious as tho each one was very important. And when he had finished he had me sit back on my heels and he surveyed me critically. He calls me his succubus ... We swam in a pond, and he looked like a god out of legend — tall and golden

And strong ... I am living a fantasy. It is too good to be true, but I don't care... I don't care...

August ~

Wednesday

4:00 a.m. ~ ... my own bedroom ... the still heat of an August midnight ... the stars are war white and pulse with brilliance ...

Monday ~

Father's come back from his speaking engagement. I am TOO HAPPY and he is finally suspicious.

Tuesday ~

Shall I tell you what Professor Indiana Jones does with a feather? No, I think not. Even I must have a few secrets.....

Saturday ~

Father knows. He confronted me and I denied nothing. He was furious! I have never seen Father lose his temper like that! He called Indy terrible names ~ said hateful things, and as violently as he attacked him, I defended him — "Indy is the most wonderful man in the whole world!!!" I know I said that a hundred times ..... I am all cried out now. He has, unbelievably LOCKED ME IN MY ROOM! I suppose I could just slip out the window and across the roof to the widow's walk and shinny down the pillar like I used to when I was small, but somehow it would feel so childish and I don't want to be childish ~ not ever again. I want to be away ~ a million miles away. I want to be in his arms and a million miles away.

Oh, Indiana Jones, come in your white Duesenberg and take me away from all this!!!

What's going to happen to us? When will I see him again? I love him so much.....

Father called Indy to the house and there was

a "scene", though Andy never raised his voice and all the shouting was Father's. I locked away like a naughty child. I could hear it all — the accusations, the name-calling, and I wanted to run to him and hold him. I wanted to hit Father... to kill him!!. I called him a bastard over and over again, crying again ... I don't know. It was horrible. I put with my hands over my ears but I couldn't shut it out. My life is in shambles, Diary! Did I say it was too good to be true? Well, I was right.....

Sunday ~

This is humiliating! They are treating me like a child — or worse. But — I get! a creature whose wishes are not even taken into consideration!

"What is best for Marion"

How can Father DO this to me?? How can he decides my future for me? From what Olympian height of wisdom can he pronounce my doom? AND HOW CAN INDY GO ALONG WITH IT!?!!?? Why doesn't he — kidnap me? Something! I've got to see him. I'll die if I don't see him..!

Tuesday ~

I did it of course. In the end I had to — use the old "escape route" and run in the night to his apartment. I must have paused on his door, and when he opened it, before anything, before even I saw him, I saw that the place was chaotic — books and suitcases — and I knew it was over. He's leaving. Something inside me started to cry, but no tears came ..... And I looked him directly in the eye. He looked at the floor. I was still hoping though, and I took the step between us and I put my arms around him and I buried my head against his chest and the tears came then... I was afraid at first that he'd never respond, but then he put his

arms around me, too and he whispered my name. But the emptiness & Oh, God, the bottomless emptiness! Its over... It's over and even now I can't accept it. It's like trying to look at a mural and get it all at once — the little parts are all I can see, small painful details, but the whole thing is still incomprehensible... He's going away. Father has given him an ultimatum. There would be a scandal. SCANDAL!! I would shout it from the bell tower of the school! I am PROUD TO BE HIS LOVER! But he would be hurt, professionally hurt, and I couldn't bear that... He drove me home. Slowly, silently. I was like a funeral procession. There is shared guilt, shared grief... and one ray of hope. And I will cling to it and live for its promise — before he drove away he said," I'll be back....."

November —

Friday — The days are short now, cold and gray and cramped as my soul.....

Monday —

He's never coming back — I was a fool to believe him...

Thursday —

No word. No call. No letter. He never cared. Never! I was a diversion, and he used me. He used me and then he went away.....

December —

Saturday — There is a certain peace in grief — a hard, cold knot that stabilizes me and spreads an icy calm over my whole body.....

Christmas Day —

I think I hate the son of a bitch.....

MONEY

Anne Wilson

(tune: "Money" from *CABARET*)

Money makes the world go round, the world go round, the world go round
Money makes the world go round, it makes the world go round.
A credit, cubit, buck or pound
Earned or stolen, won or found
Is all that makes the world go round
That clinking clanking sound can make the world go round
Money, money, money...

If you happen to be rich and you bet
You can play till you're tired
And you don't even count what you lose.
If you happen to be rich and alone
And you need a companion,
You can buy anyone that you choose
If you happen to be rich and you hear
That the Empire's attacking
And the Death Star is due anyway
You can take it on the chin, pay a bribe
And be safe somewhere else before
They blow your world away (Boom!)
Money makes the world go round, the world go round, the world go round
Money makes the world go round
Of that I'm truly sure --
Who wants to be poor?

If you haven't any cash and you're stuck on a dead little planet
And you curse to the stars at your plight
'Cause you lost a load of spice that you dumped
And there's things even you daren't fight
When an old man and a kid come along
And they make you an offer
Common sense says you ought to ignore
But when Jabba sends a guy with a gun
With a gun for his money
Common sense goes out the door!

Money makes the world go round, the world go round, the world go round
Money makes the world go round,
That clinking clanking sound of
Money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money (get a little,
get a little)

Credit, cubit, buck or pound
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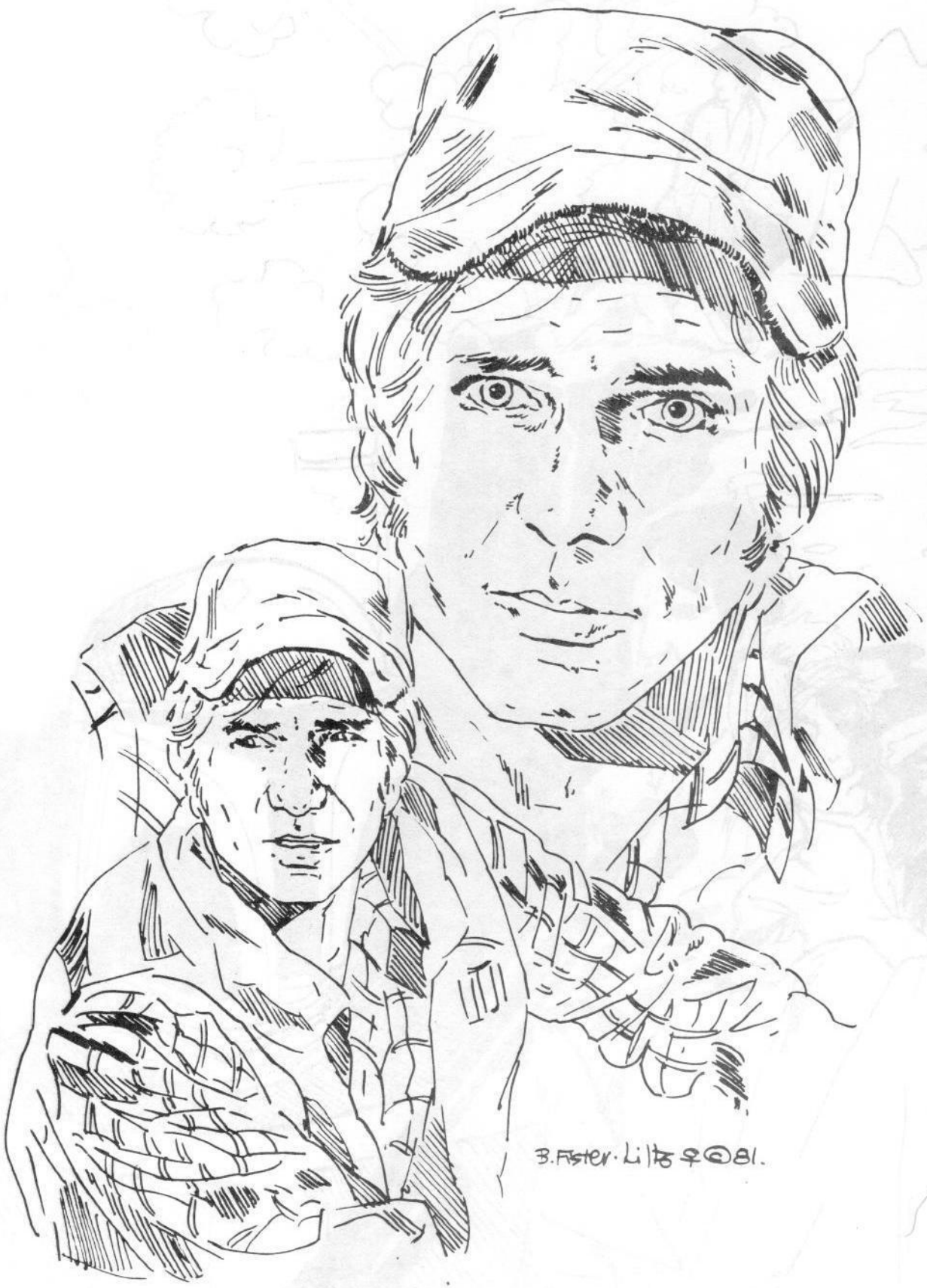
GORDON
CARLETON

Star Light, Star Bright

Hey, stars! Oh, well, I guess I'm drunk again.
It's just so quiet round the farm at night.
Hey, stars! I wish I could go back to when
I used to wish on you ... Star light, star bright...
That used to be a pretty little song
On evenings way back then when we were small
And made our wishes. Guess I'd sing it wrong
If I tried now ... I can't remember all
The words ...
Let's see ...
Star light, star bright ...
Oh, yeah. Hey, stars, it's coming back to me!
Here's the next line ... First star I see tonight...
Now what's the rest? I can't remember, see?
Wish I may....uh, wish I may, wish I might --
Hey, little star, you're not the first I seen,
But guess you'll listen to my wish tonight.
The words aren't right, but you know what I mean.
Hey, stars! I left my gun at home, so I
Can't shoot you -- or myself -- but still I'll wait.
Oh, hell ... it just ain't fair I didn't die.
No man can live all full of fear and hate.
Hey, stars! Let's just call it a night. Alone
I think too much. I need to get on. Hey,
But I'll be back tomorrow! Goin' home.
Hey, stars? Just help me get through one more day.

Marcia

Wickes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Eyes of a Jedi

J.A. Berger

illustrated by Paulie

The small, insignificant moon floated alone, barren in a system long void of life, its dying sun bathing the sphere in an eternal twilight. There was no reason for a man to walk the moon's sand blown ground, to study her worldless skies or to charter the descent patterns to her largest plain, but a man did.

The being stood close to two meters in height, his body proportions proclaiming him humanoid while his visage, encased in armor, tried to deny it. The helmeted head tilted upward, his visored eyes patiently scanning the darkened heavens. He seemed undisturbed that the moon's eternally active winds kept visibility at minimal efficiency. His attention found the red star, his reference point, with ease and he held to it for several moments before shifting his attention again to his lifeless surroundings.

Far below the rocky parapet from which he had chosen to keep his vigil the being gazed across the barren plains of the nameless moon. The winds had ebbed to a strong breeze and the sand and soil settled momentarily before again swirling upward to move onward in an endless dance of displacement. Beyond the sea of eternal sand rose sharply-peaked mountains of dark granite as barren and lifeless as the plains and more inhospitable. Nowhere were there signs of growth or water with which to sustain life.

The armored being nodded his approval of the sterile world: it would serve his purpose well. In a ceremony of silence the armor-encased humanoid christened the world Quest's End.

It had been a long, arduous trek across the limitless reaches of the galaxy in an almost impossible quest for one man, one ship, among the multitudes of life which abounded in a teeming universe. To most, it would have seemed an impossible chore, one which could require the labors of a lifetime and still lead to no assurance of success. To the armored being it was only one of many hunts he had taken in an already long, successful career. This one had proven to be a little longer, a little more difficult, and, ultimately, a little more dangerous, but that would only make the taste of attainment sweeter at the end.

And the end was in sight. Today, he would collect that which he hunted. He had never failed. This one had merely proven a little more difficult than he had originally bargained for; he made a mental note to increase the bounty when he made delivery.

The winds picked up, and the plains below him seemed alive, the sands forever moving as if seeking their rest on a world already dead.

The being stiffened as a flash of light flared from a sector of space he had been watching intently. The rasp of his life support increased as his breathing quickened in expectation. He subconsciously adjusted his oxygen intake valve, resetting it to compensate for the thinness of the world's atmosphere: another advantage, he reminded himself, that he would hold over the prey he would soon stalk. His helmeted visage settled on the dot of light that continued to move toward him. He nodded in satisfaction as the light fell into his anticipated descent pattern. It entered the moon's atmosphere and the being mentally counted off segmented timeparts. He paused at a remembered figure, studying the growing light carefully. There was another flash from the now-recognizable shape. All was going as planned.

The small, long-range shuttle listed badly to port. Its stabilizers sporadic from the explosions which had rendered it virtually powerless. It was coming down - fast.

Boba Fett, intergalactic bounty hunter, swore as he watched the vessel shudder under yet another concussion. The small ship was fighting desperately to control its descent as it fell under the gravitational influence of the small, dead world.

The damage to the ship was major, as he had intended it to be, but it was imperative that the vessel land safely: the bounty would be worthless to him dead. He clinched his hands into tight fists as he watched the ship drop. The pilot was good - very good. Under less efficient hands the small craft would have fallen from the skies like a mortally wounded F'Lanta soarer.

A vapor trail marked the craft's descent, her fuel igniting as it streamed from her ruptured lines. At any moment a spark could end the small vessel's life, and those of the crew aboard her. The pilot, aware of the danger, shut down all systems. The ship drifted powerlessly toward the plains. The possibility of ignited fuel minimized by the powerless fall assured she would not explode in the skies.

The being shifted uneasily as he realized - all too well - the danger the crew aboard the craft faced in their powerless landing. The probabilities of a rough landing had multiplied tremendously. Without the employment of the vessel's braking thrusters or small, powerful retros, the shuttle would crash. The damage was more severe than he had anticipated, but it had been a plan of desperation, the last hope for the bounty before his prey disappeared again into the abyss of space and his unknown lair. It had been an opportunity he could not allow to pass. The small shuttle had been vulnerable in ways the man's customary transportation was not. Her intricate systems innocently unguarded against the sabotage he had arranged.

All had gone as planned. At lift-off the shuttle had activated the first fusion bomb wired to her hyper-drive. When she had reached minimum thrust for jump data it had exploded destroying hyper-drive systems and all ajoining defense and communications. She had drifted into the reaches of the Ordmandel system. Before her crew had time to check her failures, still another bomb had erupted taking out her main-drive and badly disabling her guidance. It had been the first flash he had witnessed. The explosion had done its job well - too well - for it was obvious that even on full manual, the pilot had been left with little more than a shell of the once spaceworthy vessel. He would need all his vast skills to walk away from the landing he now prepared for.

The shuttle screamed over the armored being's vantage point. The pilot used the world's winds and buffeting turbulence expertly to slow the powerless, falling vessel. He fought to put the craft into a glide pattern over the plain, trying to control against a total disaster. With a reckless desperation that Fett had grown to expect and admire in the pilot, the shuttle's thrusters burst to life. The craft shuddered violently before she was again shut off from her life line and the escaping fuel. The ship slowed. The fuel thick in the vapor behind her had not ignited. The pilot had gambled and won, but still was a long way from the sands of Quest's End.

The vessel, no longer able to hold altitude, fell. She hit hard - bounced - then tipped to starboard. Her landing gear crumbled beneath her. On her side, she skidded, digging great trenches into the undisturbed sands of the barren world. Han Solo had landed.

The damaged craft lay still, her titanium hull battered, bent, scarred with the carbon scoring of the attacks within her belly. She lay silent, unmoving, as lifeless as the world on which she had come to die. And still Fett waited, his patience grown easy with years of exposure. If the pilot wasn't dead, he was dangerous. If he were alive he could not remain long in the ship. The fumes, smoke and decaying artificial atmosphere would soon force him out. Fett's gloved hand touched the laser rifle slung over his shoulder. Soon the hunt would begin. He had chosen the terrain, the prey and he eagerly awaited the game. There would be two men to enhance the interest in the hunt. He studied the unopened hatch intently. What would the unknown man contribute to this hunt? He didn't know, but the unknown factor heightened his anticipation.

The narrow confines of the shuttle were dim with failing emergency lighting and were rapidly filling with smoke as a darkened shape stumbled awkwardly down the corridor. He fell to his knees, his body racked with lung threatening coughs, as he tried to navigate within the growing death trap of the downed ship. He covered his nose and mouth with a vest he had wrestled from his body, but was forced to abandon the meager protection when his right arm refused to obey its nerves' order to grasp the collar of the prone figure at his feet. The tall man coughed, dropped the vest, grabbed the fallen man with his left hand and again fought his way toward the hatch. The ship, on her side, made traversing her corridors almost impossible to the injured man who attempted to half carry, half drag his unconscious companion.

Standing erect, the pilot of the vessel hit the hatch open control. The hatch remained closed. Desperately, the man hit it again. There was no response. They were sealed in the vessel which could easily become their tomb.

The fumes of escaping fuel strong in his nostrils, Han Solo swore, then coughed again. There was a chance, a dangerous one. But, he was not a man who shied away from danger. He had not come this far, he told himself, to die inside the shuttle because he could not open the hatch. Coughing, his eyes streaming from the irritating sting of the smoke and building fumes, he unholstered the blaster, reaching for it left-handed, the movement clumsy and awkward for the normally right-handed man. He took a step backward and aimed at the controls. He squeezed the trigger. A deadly beam erupted in the silence, struck the control with a sharp concussion, hissed, sparkled, then fused the intricate wiring. The hatch flew open.

Solo went to his knees, the coughing warning him of the danger of remaining longer in the ship. He holstered the blaster. Reaching down he weakly lifted the motionless figure of his young friend. With the last of rapidly failing strength, he pushed the body through the hatch, balanced it there, and precariously pulled himself up onto the edge and dropped to the ground. He stumbled, caught himself against the side of the ship, then hurriedly eased the unconscious figure across his left shoulder. A sound within the belly of the ship told the tall Corellian they had run out of time. He pushed himself away from the vessel, staggered under the weight of his awkward burden, and forced his weakened legs into a stumbling run.

He threw himself to the ground. As an explosion touched the shuttle, he maneuvered his body protectively over the small, motionless one of the young Jedi. He ducked his head to avoid flying debris and pressed his face into his friend's flight jacket. His head threatening to split under the pressure, he gritted his teeth, and fought to retain consciousness. His body was assaulted by the turbulence of the final blast as the angry, painful rain of debris pelted his all but unprotected back. He screamed soundlessly, his mind - his senses - reeling under the intensity of the blast.

It was over. A silence, like none he could remember, settled over him as he forced air into smoke-filled lungs, his body racked with cough after cough that brought pain to every nerve of his being. He shook his head to clear away the firy cobwebs that nestled there, then swore at his foolishness, his head threatening to split apart if he attempted to move it again. He didn't. Red veins of pain flashed through a mind that was attempting to override and deal with concussion. He was dizzy and he felt bile rising in his throat. He fought it down and forcefully willed it to remain uninvolved in his already numerous problems. He had no time to be sick.

He lay next to the pale, unconscious youth he had pulled from the shuttle. Luke Skywalker was alive. Solo could see the boy's chest rising and falling in a motion of normal respiration. The Corellian drew a deep breath of gratitude then grimaced when painfully deprived lungs reminded him to breathe slowly. He reached out and touched the bleeding gash at the boy's temple. It was the only injury immediately noticeable, and Solo probed the ragged wound gently. Whatever had caused it had cut deeply and cleanly; there was no sign of foreign matter in the wound.

The wind increased. The injured spacer shivvered more from reaction and trauma than actual discomfort. He touched Luke's face with a gentle, caring hand. "It's okay, Kid. We've been through worse - than this."

Taking a chance that he could retain consciousness, Han Solo sat up. The buzzing in his ears increased until he felt his skull was aswarm with a hive of Alanti Jackbees. He set his teeth against the discomfort and took a quick check of his own injuries.

His right arm was useless. He could move it only with pain, which threatened to carry him into oblivion if he did not heed its warnings. He had wrenched it badly. As his mind cleared and efficiently sorted through the various pains, he found the reason behind the increased discomfort of his wrenched shoulder. The back of his shirt was plastered to his back with a moisture he was unsure he cared to acknowledge. Gritting his teeth, he reached to his shoulder left-handed, reaching as far back as he could. His fingers came back smeared with blood. He swore helplessly, remembering the impact - the battering he had taken during the explosion. He had been savagely struck by flying debris, sliced open as neatly as with the blade of the ancient weapon his young friend carried.

Attempting to keep his right arm immobile, Solo slipped out of his shirt. The back of the thin material verified his worse suspicions. It was completely soaked with blood. He grasped the shirt sleeve between strong, white teeth, and savagely ripped it into long, ragged strips. Weakly, he paused for breath. He had to stop the bleeding or he would be of no use to either of them.

And, his Corellian senses were screaming to be acknowledged. He recognized the warnings. He refused to allow himself to fall prey to his anxieties; he knew they were there to save him. They couldn't stay near the ship. They had to seek shelter - hide. He didn't bother to question his instincts. They were finely tuned from long years of constant exposure to danger and the promise of quick death. But, unless he could get the bleeding controlled, he could not hope to get far - nor live long. His body could become as dangerous to his life as the unknown that awaited them on this unchartered battle ground.

He forced a strip of material over his right shoulder, then fumbled awkwardly for the end left-handed. After several minutes of intense struggle and perspiringly painful maneuvers, he managed an awkward, if not totally efficient bandage. He could not see the wound he attempted to dress. He worked from the growing pain as the numbness of the recent injury wore off. He applied pressure as best he could, then lay back spent from his efforts.

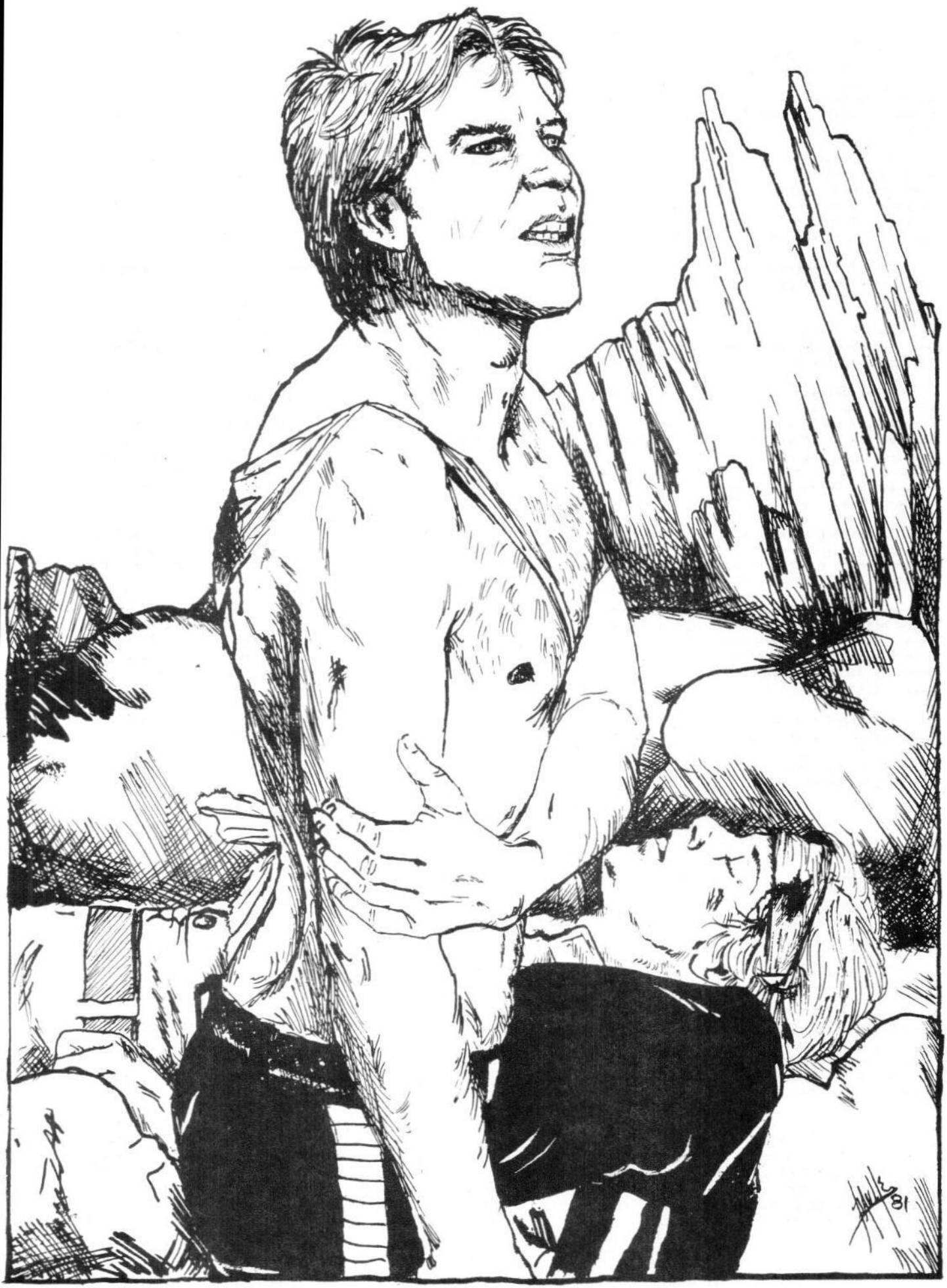
It had taken only a matter of moments, yet he sensed the anxieties mounting. He hurriedly tightened the remains of a tattered sleeve about the boy's forehead, packing the temple wound snugly. There was no sign of returning consciousness in the young Jedi. He would have to be carried.

He struggled to stand on shaky legs and tottered unsteadily as he glanced about their surroundings with the eye of both hunter and hunted. He had been both on more occasions than he cared to remember. It had supplied him with the knowledge of survival: he would not be taken easily by whoever, or whatever, had brought them down.

Spacer's instinct directed his attention to the flat mesa several kilometers to the north. It was the closest observation point to their present position where he could achieve the altitude necessary to activate the small emergency homer he had pocketed hurriedly before leaving the shuttle.

His suspicions turned him away from the mesa and toward the rough inhospitable peaks to the west. The wind was again picking up, swirling sand about the standing Corellian, driving the tiny, sharp bits of soil into the unprotected flesh of his bare torso. He glanced again toward the mesa. His back stiffened, his hazel eyes narrowing in confirmed anger. He had seen a brief flash from the mesa. The moon's weak sun managing a minute reflection from something alien to the world's existence and his alert observation had picked it up. They were being watched. And whatever awaited them, waited there.

Reaching down, the injured Corellian pulled the Tatooine youth to his feet. Swaying momentarily under the dead weight, Solo maneuvered the boy, face down, over his left shoulder. He allowed the boy's body to slide until he had him balanced properly to carry. He glanced once more toward the hazy mesa, then up at the heavy twilight that bathed the world in its eternal semi-darkness. Groaning with the weakness that washed over him, Han Solo angled his steps toward the barren peaks of the western mountains and their ajoining foothills. He pulled his thoughts away from whatever watched them from the mesa. He forced one foot ahead of the other, keeping his mind off his pain and the worry he bore for his young friend. Instead, he allowed himself to draw



on anger, hatred and revenge for whatever it was that would come for them.

It had been an unscheduled trip to the Falaka System, so whatever had been done to arrange this had not been planned in advance. The shuttle had been leased and carefully checked out before lift-off. Having re-checked her himself , Solo knew anyone intent on sabotaging the vessel could have done so anytime after or before lift-off. Her systems were unshielded and vulnerable, as those of his own ship, the Millennium Falcon were not.

They had taken all the precautions they could, but it had obviously not been enough. Solo shrugged. They were alive and moving. Whoever had planned this had not expected them to survive the crash. He paused. His heart quickening under the sudden thought that had sent a cold tentacle of suspicion coursing his spine. Maybe someone had the patience and experience to wait, to allow them to tire, to weaken, to keep moving until they could offer no resistance, then take them - alive. Han Solo swore weakly. It had not been an Imperial trap. They did not go to these extremes to capture Alliance spies or outlawed smugglers.

There were a lot of beings Solo could think of who would wish him dead, others who would relish having him alive and helpless at their disposal. It was on one of these beings that he concentrated his thoughts as he attempted to sidestep the tentacles of pain that spred through his shoulder and down his back as he struggled under the weight of his unconscious friend.

There were those, he reminded himself, who also sought young Skywalker. They were by far the more dangerous. But, they would have had no need for the methods that had been used. No, he reasoned, whoever had seen to their abandonment on this moon had planned well. He would stalk them, patiently, skillfully. Silently, Han Solo put a name to the enigma he feared would follow them - bounty hunter.

His jawline hardened, his hazel eyes reflecting with a deadly intensity that forebode no good to the unknown hunter. He had a beacon set to the emergency frequency of a very deceiving looking freighter, her gains powerful enough to receive the tiny devise's signal if he could achieve the necessary elevation. All he needed was time.

Han Solo was an impatient man. He never doubted that one day he would go down in a flurry of laser fire, but he tightened his handsome mouth into a thin line, the hell if he would just stand by and let a bounty hunter take him. He quickened his step. The wind was rising, pushing urgently at his back.

Fett moved cautiously from the open hatch of his small ship, Slave I, and coded all her security to his voice lock. He shifted his rifle onto his shoulder then strolled purposely toward the smoldering remains of the small shuttle. There was little left to identify her hull design. He studied her briefly then turned away. A couple of long-legged strides and the being paused and knelt at the spot where Solo and Skywalker had fallen. With a gloved hand, he lightly traced the story in the barren soil of Quest's End. One man, unconscious, vulnerable, a burden, a hindrance to the stronger. His helmeted visage somehow managed to portray his amusement at his findings.

It was Solo's instincts for survival, his Corellian desires to put nothing ahead of his own self-preservation that had kept the smuggler one step ahead of the galactic hunter. In experienced patience the being had sought the Corellian's weaknesses. There was the Wookiee. But, he had proven to be a strength to the outlaw. Solo, alone, was dangerous. Solo, teamed with the Wookiee was deadly. He had forced down his intolerant nature and waited for the vulnerable link he had found in every being he hunted. His patience had been rewarded when Solo had lifted the slender figure of the boy onto his shoulder.

The gloved hand touched a dark stain in the sand and moved it about thoughtfully. He had watched Solo from the mesa through micro-binoculars while he had attempted to dress his wound. He had been amused at the man's resourcefulness. He relished the hunt.

He got to his feet and glanced westward. In the haze of undefinable distances he saw the moving figure of his prey. He nodded his approval. The Corellian would prove to be a worthy challenge.

* * * * *

Han felt his knees buckling and managed to catch himself before he fell. He eased the unconscious Jedi from his shoulder and knelt wearily beside him. He drew greedily at the barren world's thin air as he attempted to slow his pounding heart. The thin atmosphere was making his task all but impossible, as he weakened under the burden of the boy and his numerous injuries.

Reaching out, Solo grasped Luke's limp wrist and, with a hand he was unable to steady, he checked the young Rebel's pulse. It was steady, strong, if perhaps a little thready. He wasn't sure if he could trust his conclusions. There was too much pain to attempt to control - to think past.

"Luke - come on, Kid. I don't know - how - much longer - I can - carry ya - "

With a gentle hand, he brushed the sandy, blood-stiffened hair away from the young Jeid's peaceful face. Solo groaned.

His dizziness had returned. The last mile he had covered had been a torment of wavering vision, illusions of steps taken without touching ground and headaches which resounded with increasing intensity. The illness he had fought down before, had returned forcing him to stop; to reel, to retch until he was totally shaken from the efforts. Even now, he could not remember how many times he had forced himself to ignore the symptoms of his concussion.

They had to reach the mountains, to seek shelter, a place to defend against the spector that followed his faltering steps, and to reach elevation necessary to activate the beacon he still carried.

He drew another slow, weary breath, his eyes never leaving the pale, blood-stained features of his friend while his mind attempted to work past the pain. His shoulder was stiff, unusable, the muscles refusing to acknowledge his orders without threatening him with the mindless oblivion of unconsciousness; a sleep from which he might not awaken. The wound from the flying shrapnel had started bleeding again. He had felt the warm fluid tracing tracks down his naked back. Setting his teeth in dogged determination, Solo struggled to his feet, wordlessly acknowleging the fact that his attempted dressing had only slowed the bleeding. He had done all he could - for himself - for Luke. They had to keep moving. He needed no glance northward to know the silent figure would be drawing closer, yet staying cleverly out of blaster range, following, anticipating, waiting for the weakness of Solo's wounds to bring him down.

The wind was strong when Solo again shouldered his burden and struggled doggedly westward. He squinted and studied the gray skies above. Visibility had decreased, the skies dusky with tell-tale signs of a building storm. Solo swore helplessly and increased his faltering stride. They had to reach the foothills. Desperation pushed him faster, the wind driving at his back. Without shelter they would likely perish in a bad sandstorm. Already, he felt the increased difficulty in breathing. The thin air, the wind, the driving sand and his forced exertion would soon take him down. He broke into a stumbling trot. The wind rose to gale strength, the sand swirling about the struggling Corellian until he could see only a hand's length before him. He lowered his head and pushed onward, his lungs screaming for more oxygen than he fould find in the thin air.

One step. He pitched awkwardly forward, his legs shaking. Iron-willed determination kept him upright. One more step. He repeated the procedure. Words were echoing in his mind; he would not have been able to voice them aloud, one more step. The wind would have stolen them from him, pulling them away as it did the air he needed so desperately. He struggled on. One more step.

It was his last. He pitched forward and lay still.

Luke.

He wanted only to close his eyes, to force the noise of the storm out of his mind; to allow the blackness of unconsciousness to claim him, to hold him, to release him finally to death.

Luke.

The one word kept him alive.

He pulled himself to the young Jedi's side and cradled the boy's head against his chest as he attempted to protect Luke's nose and mouth from the driving sand. He buried his own face into the boy's warm neck.

He had to get up. He sat still, unable to rise.

They would die. Han gasped as the driving sand pelted his back and his torn flesh.

"I can't - Luke - I tried - "

Pain. Red flashes of torment. He tightened his grip on the unconscious Jedi and sat still.

"Han - "

The Corellian stiffened. Again, his hands tightened about the boy, as he searched for the movement he was sure he had felt - a voice he was not sure he had heard.

The slight figure moved weakly attempting to pull away then, as if sensing the necessity of their closeness, the motion ceased.

Han put his lips to the boy's ear. "Can you walk?"

The blonde head hesitated and Solo feared the boy had once again lost consciousness. He sighed as the head nodded.

"We've got to - find shelter - if we stay here - we'll die - "

Using the last of his already vastly depleted energies, Han Solo struggled to his feet. This time, Luke Skywalker stood beside him.

He reached out and steadied the youth; the contact also steadied him. Desperately, they held to each other, attempting to keep their feet under the savagery of the driving wind. Solo swore wordlessly. He had no idea what direction they faced. The figure beside him a blurred outline. A step away and they could lose each other. They were moving, stumbling, faltering, fighting the driving sand. It was some time before Solo realized it was Luke who guided their steps. He gave in willingly and followed. The boy was desert bred and raised. Perhaps his instincts for directions were better than his own. They couldn't be any worse, he admitted reluctantly. He had no idea in which direction they traveled, but they were up and moving. If they had remained down, they would have died. Solo thanked his Corellian deities - those he could remember after years of neglect.

"I guess I owe you - again."

Solo chuckled weakly. "And, you found us this place. You can quit counting. I did a long time back."

His breathing easier, Solo attempted to sit up. It was a painful reminder of his injuries; he gasped in pain.

"Han?"

"Yeah, kid?" He mumbled between tightly clinched teeth.

"Are you - were you hurt in the crash?"

Solo glanced at the shadowy figure beside him, the darkness of their shelter blurring the boy's features. He had not been aware of the Corellian's wounds.

"We got off lucky." Solo longed to put his shoulders to the cool granite wall, but feared the contact with his back. "The final demise of our ship had my ears ringing and my head pounding for a while." He admitted lightly. "I wrenched my shoulder when I tried to move the stabilizer after she froze up, remember?"

"Yes. How bad is it?"

"I won't be using it for awhile."

"Han - there's something else - "

Solo glanced at his friend. "Something flew off the ship when she blew. It hit me below the right shoulder blade - I've had some trouble controlling the bleeding - "

"Did you get it stopped?"

"Best I could. Don't worry about it. It's too dark in here to see - "

"I'm going to try."

A hand touched Solo's bandaged shoulder and gently turned him away.

"The dressing's soaked!"

Han grunted. "Best not to disturb it, Luke. We have no water - nothing - to redress it with - "

A gentle, but firm hand pressed on a point below his shoulder blade and a red bolt of intense pain hit him. He stifled a scream and choked it down.

"Han, there's something in there."

"I think - I - can - believe that - "

The gentle hand remained on Han's bare shoulder. "How long was I unconscious?"

"I don't know, Kid - too long - I was gettin' damned worried - "

"You've been carrying me? With this shoulder, the storm - someone following us - "

"Forget it. You'd have done the same for me - "

Silence again fell between them. It was a small, electronic bleep that shattered the silence

"What's that?"

"Our homer. We've gained some elevation, not much, but maybe enough for us to get a weak signal to the Falcon. She's got the most powerful receivers I could install - just maybe - "

"What about the storm?"

"Kid, this ain't no time to be thinking of reasons it <u>won't</u> work. Let's think of the reasons it <u>will</u>."

* * * * * *

The ancient gods of Quest's End were evening the odds and Boba Fett, Intergalactic Bounty Hunter, was not a happy man. Under the protection of his life support, the armored being took stock of his situation.

The storm had taken him by surprise. Although he was under no discomfort from the driving winds, or the blowing sands, his sense of direction had been as fully disorientated as he was sure the Corellian's had been.

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Luke stumbled. Solo grabbed him, steadied him, then gasped in understanding. Another step and he stumbled Rocks. More rocks. They held to each other and felt their way forward, their steps taking them upward. Five minutes later, they pushed between boulders large enough to shelter them from the driving wind. Solo took the lead, his instincts searching and finding the shelter Luke had led them to.

It could not have been called a cave, merely a sheltered opening, dug out from surrounding boulders by years of blowing sands and a millennia of flowing seas of the now dead world. But, it was big enough for the two men to stretch out on quiet, untouched sand, its granite walls shutting out the intensity of the storm. It was quiet. All Solo could hear was the agony of their labored breathing. He closed his eyes luxuriating in the silence - the stillness - and the sounds of life beside him. He longed for enough light to see the youth, instead of the mere outline of the young Jedi.

"How's the head?" He gasped, eager to talk, but unable to fill his lungs enough to make conversation lengthy or comfortable.

"I've - got - a hell of a headache." Luke's voice was soft and reassuring to the uneasy Corellian.

"Yeah - me, too. I don't know what you hit - but, you sure had me - worried. You sure - you're all right?"

"I hurt in a lot of places - where are we?"

The lopsided smile touched Solo's pale lips. "You would have to ask me - that - "

"You don't know?"

"Good guess. This ball of sand was all - there - was between us - and treading space - remember?"

There was a hesitation as Luke Skywalker attempted to do just that, remember. It was a slow, painful procedure as flashes of memory began to impregnate his throbbing senses. "Yeah, the explosions - they were no accident."

"No. They weren't - " Solo rested, reluctantly anticipating the boy's logical progression in reasoning.

"Someone went to a lot of trouble setting all those charges in our systems - just to kill us. One big one, set to detonate after we went hyper, would have been foolproof." Luke concluded.

"You got it." Solo agreed emotionlessly.

"Instead, they stopped us. Cut all communications - weaponry - and drifted us into this dead system. We were lucky this world was here - " Silence greeted Luke's faltering words. "Or, were we?"

"No - we're not - "

"There's someone here? Waiting for us? "

"Yeah. Before the storm he was about two - three kilometers behind us - now - " Solo paused, "It's anybody's guess."

"Who?"

"I don't know. Not Imperial, and not your old friend, Vader - "

"No. If it were Vader he would have found us before now. The storm would not have slowed him. The power of the force would have - "

"Not now, Kid, " Solo sighed, "I don't think I'm up to any of that hocus-pocus right now."

"It wasn't my enemies that brought us down - "

"It's some of mine." Han finished. "That's how I've got it figured. We'll rest - stay put - while that storm blows he can't find us - " A thought stopped the Corellian. "How in hell did you find this place?"

A weary smile pulled at the young Jedi's lips, his vacant-eyed stare focusing on Solo's voice in the darkness. "You're not up to it, remember?" His voice softened with a touch of regret. "Let's just call it luck."

Solo grunted. "Yeah - luck. Lucky we're both alive - like to stay that way - "

"I don't remember the landing - "

"It was bad. Nothing to remember - she'd been blown to hell. We barely got off her before - "

Silence fell over the small enclosure.

While his smoked lenses of the visored helmet had protected his eyes, the visibility had still been minimal. He had been forced to stop, to wait impatiently for the storm to break, for the air to clear. When it did, he looked upon a deserted plain. His prey had vanished as if swallowed by the very ground on which he stood.

Meticulously, the being swept the plains with his micro-binoculars. Nothing moved. Again, he made a careful sweep of the plains westward. The foothills were close. He swept them with care. It was possible the Corellian had been able to reach them during the storm Perhaps, even now, the being reasoned, the outlawed spacer could be deep within the protection of those hills.

Against the full throes of the storm he had seen the man go down several times under the burden he carried. He had thought the man unable to rise on each occasion, but he had. He had kept moving during the savageness of the storm. Fett's respect for the smuggler increased. The man, hurt, weak from blood loss, and the disadvantages of thin air would survive the storm and find shelter. Now, he would seek high ground to put himself above the hunter. He was not a man to underestimate.

Fett studied the roughed foothills. He would reach the slopes in another hour. If he had not seen movement by then, he would attempt to gain the higher ground, find shelter and set his ambush. He had played the game long enough, he was growing impatient.

He knelt and checked the mobile units of his kneedarts. He grunted in exasperation, at his findings. The delicate mechanisms were frozen useless by fine grains of sand. He unfastened the weaponry and let it fall. Without the added weight he would be able to increase his speed.

He checked his utility belt and the storage packs for the laser rifle he carried. The Corellian would be weakened, badly by now, he reasoned. He would need nothing more than time and a fully charged rifle to take him. Yes, he assured himself, the end was near.

Luke Skywalker listened wearily to the howling of the winds outside their shelter and shivered with discomfort. Silence had fallen between them as they rested from the ordeal that had brought them through the storm. He could hear Solo's ragged breathing within the silence about them. And, he worried.

Han Solo was hurt. Luke remembered the wet bandages he had touched - the agony that had coursed the Corellian's body when his fingers had encountered the foreign matter imbedded in his back. Han had made light of the injury. But, Luke knew the constant blood loss would drain what strength the man had and leave him vulnerable to the being who followed.

The young Jedi gingerly touched the blook-caked bandage at his temple. There was more. He was conscious - on his feet. He should be a help to the rapidly failing Solo now when he needed him the most. How could he tell him that he would probably be more of a hindrance now then he'd been before?

Luke blinked,closed his eyes and drew the familiar essence of the Force about him. It was a warmth, a comfort, He drew on it greedily, letting it settle about him like a cloak of well being. It was a friend, a guiding hand, he told himself. It had become a lot to him since Ben had awakened him to its existence. Now, he asked it to become his eyes. A feeling of contentment settled over him and Luke felt his anxieties ebb away. He was secure in the Force. It was there for him - for Han. A contented, benign smile pulled at the youth's pale lips. Someday the Corellian would believe. Someday he would accept what he could not now acknowledge.

Luke sighed. There was so much he longed to tell his friend; to share with him. There was so much the willful Corellian could learn if he would only lower his mental prejudices. His eyes closed, his breathing shallow, relaxed, Luke Skywalker opened himself willingly to the power within and meditated.

He had no idea how long he had sat bathed in the contentment of the Force, when the power sounded its alarm.He acknowleged it immediately and retuned his senses to his surroundings. Everything seemed as before. He could still hear the wind outside, but its intensity had lessened. The storm was blowing itself out. They would soon have to get moving again. Although he had not dwelt on the thought during the storm, his instincts had warned him that the small beacon could not penetrate the storm's interference. They would have to get it into the open and offer it more elevation.

"Han." Luke's voice sounded loud within the confines of their shelter. There was no answer. His heart quickened.

"Han?"

He could hear the breathing of the older man. Why didn't he answer? Reaching out, Luke felt his way through the darkness until he touched the shoulder of the Corellian. He knelt beside the spacer and fumbled for Solo's face. His fingers encountered hair gritty with sand. He pushed it away from the smuggler's forehead.

"Han? Hey, ol' buddy, come on. Wake up!"

Luke's fingers brushed Solo's closed eyes and lightly touched the thick lashes. There was no flicker of awareness. His hand, now unsteady with fear, moved downward until he touched Solo's mouth; the lips dry, caked with sand and grit.

"Han! Damn it. Wake up!"

Desperately, Luke slapped at Solo's warm cheeks. Once. Twice. Movement? He stopped, again he felt for the eyes. This time, the lids reacted to his feather-like touch. He sighed with relief allowing the fear to dissipate as she shook the Corellian.

"Han! Come out of it!"

Solo groaned and attempted to force the heaviness of sleep from him. "Luke?"

"I'm right here. God, you had me worried! The headaches you mentioned - were you dizzy - sick?"

"Yeah. Take it easy, kid. I'm all right - " Solo struggled to sit up and gentle, caring hands helped him.

"You shouldn't have gone to sleep." Luke admonished sharply, fear still noticeable in his voice.

"Didn't mean to - it slipped up - on - me -- "

"How are you now?"

Solo grimaced as he slowly opened his eyes. He blinked away the dregs of sleep, then settled dull-eyed attention on the youth beside him. "I'm okay - just damned sore. I don't think I want - to try - moving the shoulder - "

Solo looked up. Worry touched hazel eyes and he studied the youthful features of his friend more closely. Luke knelt beside him, his countenance still somewhat hazy in the semi-darkness of their surroundings. There was something disturbing in the boy's bearings, something he didn't like. Suspicion hit him hard.

"How are you, Kid? Any more headaches?"

"No." Luke denied softly. He turned his head to the Corellian's welcomed voice. "It hurts to touch my temple, but there's no headache."

Solo's brow furrowed with worry. Tbe side of the boy's face was caked with blood, sand and the grit of their struggles. His features pale, as Solo was sure his own were, from their pain, their injuries, but there was something else - something wrong.

He settled his gaze on the young rebel's pale-blue eyes. They were clear, pain free. He stiffened. They also looked beyond him - through him. They did not focus on his face. A cold touch of fear ran his spine.

"Han, I think the storm is letting up - we should get moving for higher ground - "

Han, his mouth dry with the agony of long hours without water, knew that was not the reason behind the sudden dryness and the tight constriction in his throat. His eyes were hardened agates of gun-metal gray, as he raised a hand and slowly moved it before those blank - yes, he confirmed - sightless eyes.

Luke's hand reached out and caught his, held it, as if sensing its presence. Solo knew he had not seen it. The pale-blue eyes were as vacant as the abyss of a blackhole. Luke Skywalker was blind.

"How long - " he faltered.

"Since I regained consciousness." Luke answered softly.

Their hands tightened; one radiating fear, helplessness, anger; the other offering reassurance, comfort and strength.

"I'm sorry." Han whispered, his voice husky with an emotion he could not control.

Luke smiled, his features reflecting a peaceful acceptance in vivid contrast to the anguish he sensed on the handsome features of his tall friend.

"It's all right - "

"It's not all right!" Solo flared. "It's my trouble - my fight - "

"Han, it's our trouble, our fight. He brought us down." Luke reassured the Corellian. "He'll have to deal with us both. I think he may have taken on more than he can handle."

"Luke," helplessness radiated in Solo's pain filled voice as he studied the peaceful countenance of his friend. "You're blind - "

"A physically blinded Jedi, my friend, is not necessarily a blind Jedi."

There was an assurance in the youthful voice that added a knowing maturity to his words. Solo groaned and looked away from the sightless eyes that continued to fill him with mounting helplessness and eager hatred towards the being responsible. "He'll pay for this." He vowed softly between tightly clinched teeth.

"No." Luke stopped him. "We'll do what we must to survive. Revenge, hatred, anger are wrong - they are weaknesses, Han, not strengths."

Solo swore hotly. "You're sounding more like that crazy old man every day."

"I wish I had his knowledge - his wisdom." Luke voiced sadly, "Maybe I could find a way to be a help to you now - instead of a handicap - "

"You don't talk like that!" Han snapped. "We got here in one piece - I sure in hell plan on us leaving the same way - "

"Then, the first thing we've got to do is get the beacon to higher ground." Luke spoke softly, attempting to ease Solo's anger.

Han shot him a suspicious glance. "It may have gotten a weak signal out - " He voiced hopefully.

"No. It didn't."

"We can't be sure of that."

"It didn't Han."

Solo sighed. "I ain't gonna argue the point. You're probably right."

He struggled to his feet, swaying as weakness and growing vertigo sent his head spinning. Luke's hand reached out and steadied him.

"Han?"

"Kid, I think we're in trouble." The Corellian gasped as his first step sent waves of pain through his shoulder. He blanched, swayed again, vivid colors of pain flashed behind his eyes. "We're in trouble."

"Take it easy - you got up too fast - "

Solo tried to nod, then remembered the young Rebel could not see his acknowledgement. He could not trust his voice as he attempted to voice his fears. "Ain't a complete man - between us - " He clipped off his words and glanced apologetically at the youth who held him on his feet. "I didn't mean-"

"Han, it's all right. I understand. How are you?"

"Weak. A little dizzy." Solo answered honestly. "The shoulder - I don't know how - I can make it - "

Luke gently touched the bound wound. The dressing was stiff, hard, unyielding to his probing fingers.

"I think - the bleeding's stopped."

Solo grunted his relief. "Maybe - we've got a chance. Damn it, Luke - I can't hold a blaster - much less - " He allowed his words to trail off, the rest left unspoken between them as his hazel eyes hardened in helpless frustration.

"I can."

A flicker of pride touched Solo's handsome features as he looked at the young Jedi at his side. "Damned right. Chewie'll be looking for us. Let's not keep him waiting."

* * * * * * * *

Solo paused as he selected their next ascent. He turned and quickly described the terraine to the Tatooine youth. Luke nodded, drew on the Force and allowed it to guide his steps. Once he allowed all anxieties to flow from him and gave his complete confidence to the essence within, he found all his remaining senses heightened. He followed Solo's direction with the confidence and surefootedness of the sighted. Solo struggled weakly behind the boy, his eyes searching the foothills below them. He had thought he had seen movement once, but the semi-darkness of the barren world's day left him unsure.

They were forced to rest often, their lungs demanding more oxygen than the sterile world could give. Both longed for water, their systems crying for the life giving moisture. They tried to ignore their needs. Luke had felt about their pathways until he had found several smooth, round stones and had handed several to Han. They sucked on them greedily.

"Han!"

The warning came unexpectedly, but the Corellian reacted from years of practice. He threw himself to the ground. A flash, and an energy beam struck the boulder only steps from them.

He fought awkwardly for his own weapon as he searched the terrain below for signs of their pursuer.

Luke had taken shelter behind a boulder only paces from Solo. Han thanked the boy's instincts that had saved their lives.

He waited. The palm of his hand wet about the grip of his weapon, he watched the silent foothills. They couldn't stay here, he argued with himself, they were too exposed to the enemy somewhere below. He longed to send Luke on while he covered his back, but fear kept him from making the decision. A wrong step and the boy could pitch and fall to his death. Heither could Luke move from one rock field to the next, using them as protection from the danger below. He couldn't use what he couldn't see. Han swore helplessly. His vision blurred from his growing weakness and a rising fever he had felt begin hours before. He had to stay on his feet - alert - or they would likely die.

Something moved below him. His hand tightened as he forced himself to wait. A figure moved cautiously into the open, a laser rifle moving to his shoulder as he prepared to shoot. Solo drew a deep breath, held it and squeezed off a careful shot left-handed. The blaster bucked in his weakened grip, the energy bolt erupting, sending its deadly beam toward the surprised being. He faltered, the rifle forgotten, as the beam struck the rocks at his feet. They rolled and the being fell, the boulders about him protecting him from the other shots Solo sent downward.

Solo scrambled up. "Luke, get moving while he's pinned down - hurry! I can't keep - him down - long. Be careful!"

Skywalker pushed into a protected ridge of a boulder field and stopped. He stiffened as rocks rolled under rushing feet. He moved aside and reached for the stumbling Corellian. A welcomed hand touched and grasped his.

"'S all right. I'm right - here - "

Together they slid down, their backs to the rock walls of their natural fortress.

"How far down is he?"

"'Bout the place where we started that hard - climb over the first ridge - he ain't gonna be too quick to - follow us - just now. He got careless - got into my range - " Han panted, his breathing tormented anguish.

"You've bought us some time." Luke finished softly.

Solo nodded. He leaned against the cold stone, the blaster still clinched in a left-handed grip, he breathed deeply.

"Luke, I think I'm getting a fever -- I'm warmer -- than I should be -- "

"Skywalker felt for his friend's body, touched, identified Solo's bared chest and moved his hand upward. His feathery touch found Solo's lips, his cheek and settled on a very warm forehead.

"Yes. How long?"

"Don't know -- for sure. Climbing-- I didn't noticed it. Luke -- if I pass out -- "

"You haven't yet." Luke commented softly. "We'll worry about it, if and when it happens. The beacon's signal is strong - we just need time - "

"It's running out -- Luke."

Skywalker shook his head in stubborn denial. "We'll make it -- there's only one of him -- we're above him."

"And, we've got to stay above him -- or we're dead."

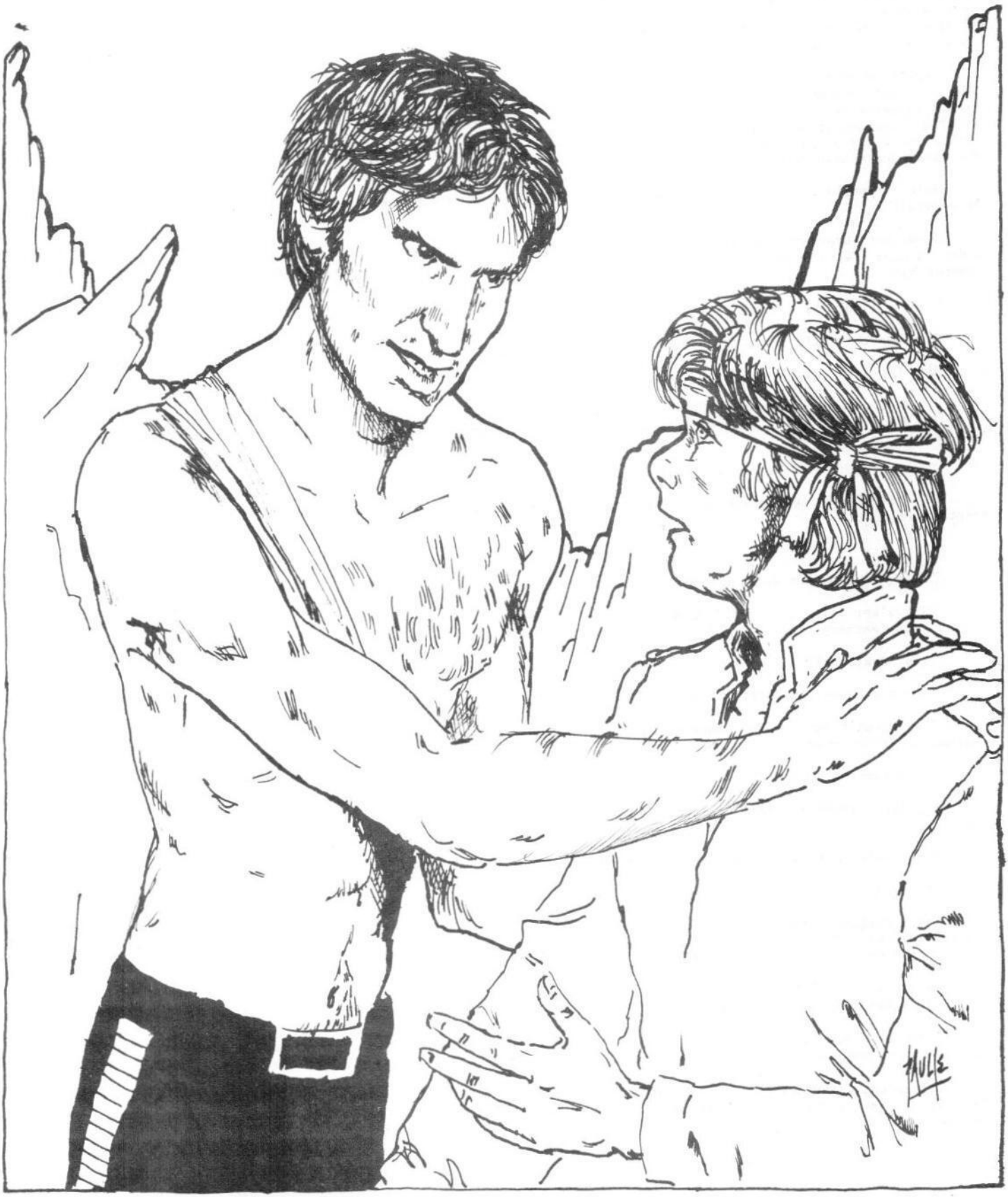
"Are you ready to move?"

The Corellian's handsome mouth pulled into the familiar lopsided smile that could not be seen by the Jedi. "No, but I don't like - the idea of - dying here. Would make one - big -- Wookiee -- damned mad -- if he got here and only had a corpse to pick - up."

"A mad Wookiee I can do without. Let's go." Luke got to his feet and held out a hand to the Corellian. Solo struggled to shaky legs, allowing Luke to again steady him. "Any dizziness?"

"Some blurred vision - now and then - " Solo admitted. "Could be the concussion, the weakness or even the fever -- just keep me up -- and moving - "

Solo studied the barren, cold, boulder field about them. He could think of only one direction - upward. He pointed Luke to the trail and described the footing. Luke started off , Solo a close, protecting step behind him.



Several more times they were shot at from a distance, but their persurer made no attempt to get into Solo's blaster range. He merely followed and waited. In time, Solo reminded himself, it would pay off. He was reaching the end of his tough Corellian endurance.

He stopped to catch his breath and to holster the blaster he had found suddenly too heavy to carry, and watched in fuzzy fascination the small figure far below them moving slowly, steadily upward. He moved a shaky hand to his face, the heat of his growing fever a very real danger to their situation. And for a moment, his attention was away from the young Jedi.

He glanced upward, then pulled quickly away from the granite wall. Luke had not been aware of his stop but had continued on, his steps angling sharply toward the southern edge of the ridges they followed. Solo swore in sudden fear and pushed forward urgently on slugish legs.

"Luke - stop. Wait for me." Solo pushed himself, fearful of the unsighted friend, who walked perilously close to the edge of the narrow, ancient pathway. "Luke - stop!"

The young Jedi stopped and turned toward the Corellian's urgent shout. He stood a step from the sheer drop.

Solo grabbed the boy and shoved him into the rock wall, away from the drop. His arms shaking, he held the boy tightly. His breathing ragged - scared.

"Han, it's all right."

"One step - one more damned step - "

"Han, I'm all right." There was no fear in Luke's voice. "I - sensed the edge. I would not have fallen."

Solo slid down. Spent. Weary. A gentle hand touched his face, his closed eyes, his flushed cheeks and his dry-cracked lips then settled on the dry, crusty bandage about his shoulder.

"A little further, Han, just a little further. Along this ridge and about twelve - fifteen meters upward - "

"What?" Han opened red-rimmed, fever-brightened eyes and settled his hazy gaze on the boy's sightless eyes. "I can't, Luke. You go on. I'll cover you - he won't get by me - easy - "

"No." Luke refused strongly. "We've come this far together. We'll go all the way. It's time to make our stand, but not here. Trust me, Han. Just a little further - just a little further - "

Solo slowly shook his head in puzzlement. "I don't know - what - how you can - " Solo paused, his Corellian instincts sensing strengths within the boy his common sense tried to deny. He gave in to them. "Kid - I'd follow you into hell - if you - thought strongly on it. Get me up."

Luke helped the bigger man to his feet. Han swayed and put his back to the firmness of granite.

A sound, all but obliterated by Solo's movement, sent the Jedi into a crouch. With a flash of speed, Han could barely follow, Luke drew the spacer's blaster from his holster, spun and fired in one smooth, fluid motion. The blaster spoke urgently, and a figure pulled back behind the ridge only meters from him.

"Let's move - quick!"

"How?" Solo stood stunned.

Luke grabbed his arm and shoved the Corellian toward the trail.

Han recoiled from the vacant stare of the blinded youth, but stumbled forward, guided by Luke's urgent directions.

The blaster spoke again, but Solo kept his attention on his moving feet, and the absolute concentration it took to put one foot before the other. He continued, his pain, his weariness, a numbness to his body and his mind.

"Here - down!"

Solo crumbled wearily down. His eyes closed and he remembered nothing else.

"Han."

He couldn't say how he knew he must fight the comfort the darkness offered, but urgency brought him up through wave upon wave of pain, discomfort, thirst, and bone-wrenching weariness. Something refused to allow him to give up. 'I've done all I can'. The thought pleaded to allow him to draw back the darkness. Another voice refused. "It's not his fight - you can't allow him to die. His star is just rising." the voice argued. 'So many may die if he does not live - if you can not believe in the Force within him,

believe in his goodness, his willingness to offer all for those he cares for - to others in the fight against oppression.' Han fought to drive the voice from his lethargic mind.

"Hocus - pocus - non-sense -- the fever - "

"Han." The voice was familiar, right and heavy with fear.

Luke - "

Luke Skywalker drew a deep breath. He guided the spacer into a comfortable position, his back again to the dark wall of solid granite.

"Welcome back. I was afraid I was going to be talking to myself."

Han opened blood-shot eyes, blinked then gazed in wide-eyed wonderment past the young Jedi. They sat on the edge of a flat bowl shaped depression that might have been an ancient crater; once fertile, alive, beautiful. Now, long dead, sterile as the rest of the world,but here ground was hard, level and as big as a spaceport.

"How did you find - "

A sad smile touched the otherwise vacant-eyed expression of the boy. "I sensed it."

Another thought brought the Corellian to his knees as he attempted to stand. Luke helped him up.

"Where's - how long was I out?"

"Only moments, but he can't be far behind . We'll be ready for him."

A warmth spread throughout the spacer's weariness. He met the strength he felt radiating from the youth. His hazel eyes hardened. "Yeah - we'll be ready - " He glanced at the trail. "We run no further."

"The beacon's sending a strong signal. Chewie's on his way."

"Those senses again?" Solo questioned lightly.

"No. Hope." Luke fenced gently.

Solo glanced about them. The place the young Jedi had selected for their stand was perfect. He studied the sightless youth in puzzled speculation. It had to be luck, the boy's inbred desert instincts - or was it? Why had the voice within his fever ridden mind sounded like that of Old Ben Kenobi? He shook the threads of bewilderment from his mind. "I want you out of range." He assessed their position. "If I can just - stay on my feet - there's so - damned much pain - "

"There's only one approach." Luke commented. "He can't get behind or above us."

"Luke, Kid, you can't know that - " Solo swore helplessly, unable to speak of the youth's sightlessness. "I don't want you buying into - this."

"What do you want me to do?' Nothing?" Luke asked softly. There was no time to make a believer of the skeptical Corellian.

"He won't see me until he makes that first turn - for a moment he'll be distracted by that crater. He won't be expecting it. Then I take him. If he wants to make a fight of it - "

Luke nodded in agreement, as he silently made his own plans.

Fett moved arrogantly up the narrow trail, his steps firm, eager, as he topped the ridge. They had reached the top. They could avoid him no longer. Twice, he had seen the Corellian go down. The man was finished, his returned fire sporadic and wild, except for one blast, that had barely missed him.

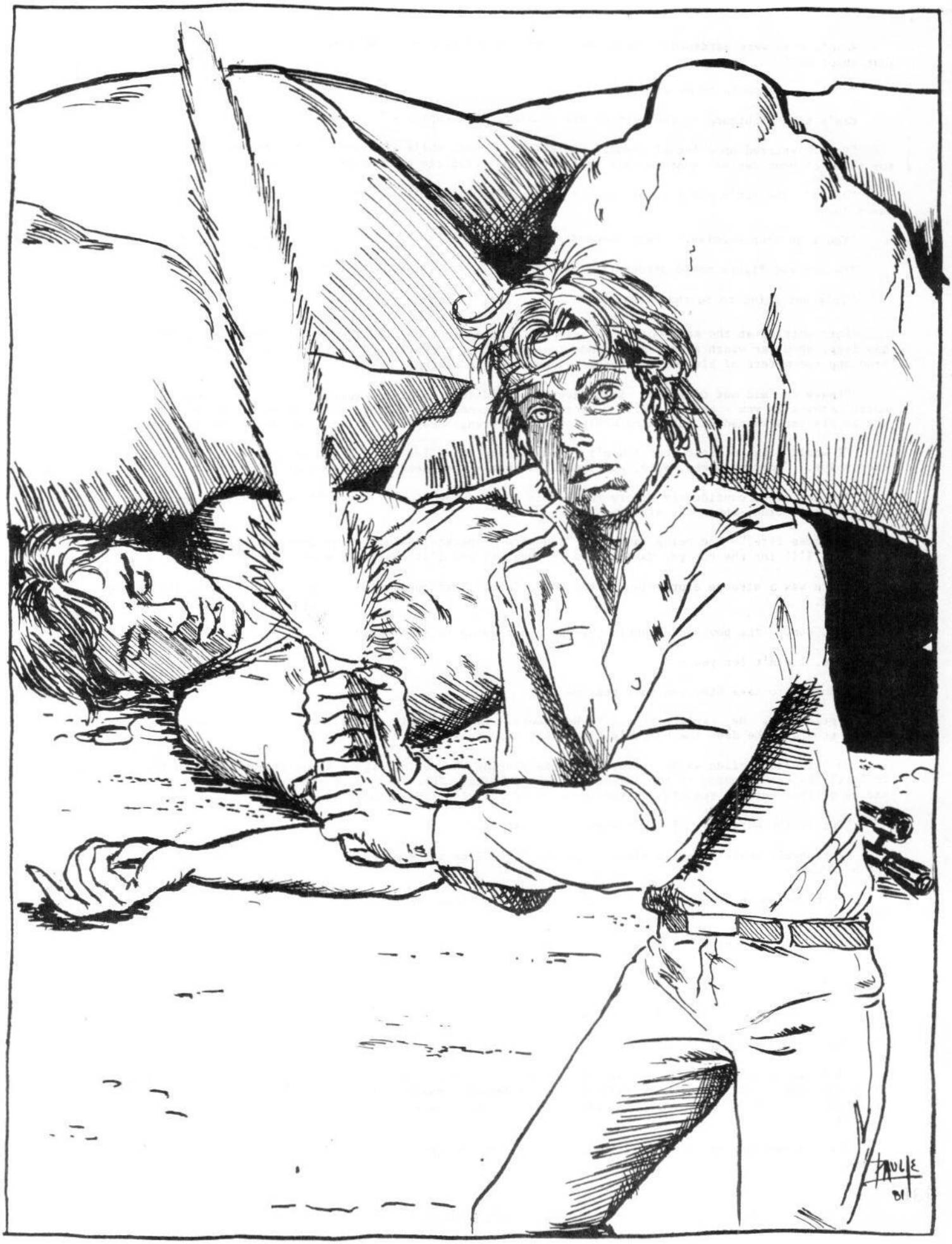
He cautiously moved to the crest, and halted in amazement; the crater capturing his first glance, Han Solo his second.

"I believe - you're looking for me - Bounty Hunter."

"Solo. It's been an interesting hunt. The boy slowed you down or you might have eluded me entirely." There was a strangely hollow sound to the being's laughter. "Of course, where could you have gone? This was my game - my deal. I'm afraid I cheated and stacked the deck."

The crooked smile pulled at the Corellian's handsome mouth. "No one stacks a deck against me, Friend. I always have a trump - "

Again the strange laughter echoed about the crater. "You're out of cards, Solo. You can't play the ones you have. You're barely able to stay on your feet. Your gunhand's unsteady, another minute or two, and you're going down. I have only to wait."



Solo's eyes were hardened flint as he fought the weakness that threatened them. "Why wait? Why not just shoot me?"

"You're worth more to me alive, Solo."

Han's hand tightened on the butt of his blaster. "The Empire - "

"You've stirred up a lot of trouble, Corellian. And, while I'm sure the Empire would pay handsomely for proof of your demise, another pays better for the privilege of your unwilling company - "

"Jabba? The Hut's put a bounty on - my head." Disbelief flickered across the handsome features of Han Solo.

"You know your enemies." Fett commented in respect. "Few of my contracts know who seek them."

The armored figure moved arrogantly, confidently toward the injured spacer.

"It's not going to be that easy, Hunter."

Fett whirled at the soft voice. He stopped at the sight of the slender youth standing before him, his legs, shoulder width apart, his hands together about the hilt of a metal tube. A touch to a small stud and two meters of blue-white energy leaped from the weapon.

"Leave the kid out of this!" Solo shouted, naked fear in his faltering voice. "You want me - he's worth nothing to you - he's blind!" Desperation tightened Solo's hand. His vision was blurred. A roaring in his ears warned of returning oblivion. His strength rapidly failing, he wavered before the hunter.

"I would like to, Solo, but I don't think he's going to let me." There was amusement in the being's deep voice. "Your weakness, Solo, every man has them - they need only be found."

The boy stood confidently before the deadly hunter, the glow of his strange weapon reflecting eerily from the pale-blue, obviously sightless eyes.

"A cross fire?" The being laughed. "You were desperate, Solo. Throw down the blaster. Surrender to me and I'll let the boy go. Make a move to level it and I'll kill him - here - now, in front of you."

There was a strange expression on the boy's face. Fett could find no other word to describe it, but undaunted.

"No, Han." The boy spoke knowingly. "He's not going to take you."

"Luke, I can't let you - "

"Hunter, to take him, you must take me - "

"Forget him. He can't hurt you." Han swore. Fear sent his finger to the trigger. He threw himself to the ground as he drew the hunger's first shot away from Luke.

He hit hard, rolled as he fired, his shots missing the moving figure as he tried to summon the strength to level the heavy weapon at the advancing armored being. There was no reserves left. His vision blurred and he drifted between reality and the darkness of oblivion. He groaned as the weariness claimed him.

"Out of the way, Boy. I don't want you. Just him."

A strangely peaceful smile played over the boy's lips as he moved to place himself between the hunter and his quarry.

There was no anger, no fear, no hatred in the sightless eyes, only unquestioning belief in what he intended.

"You can't take him. I would suggest you leave now while you still can."

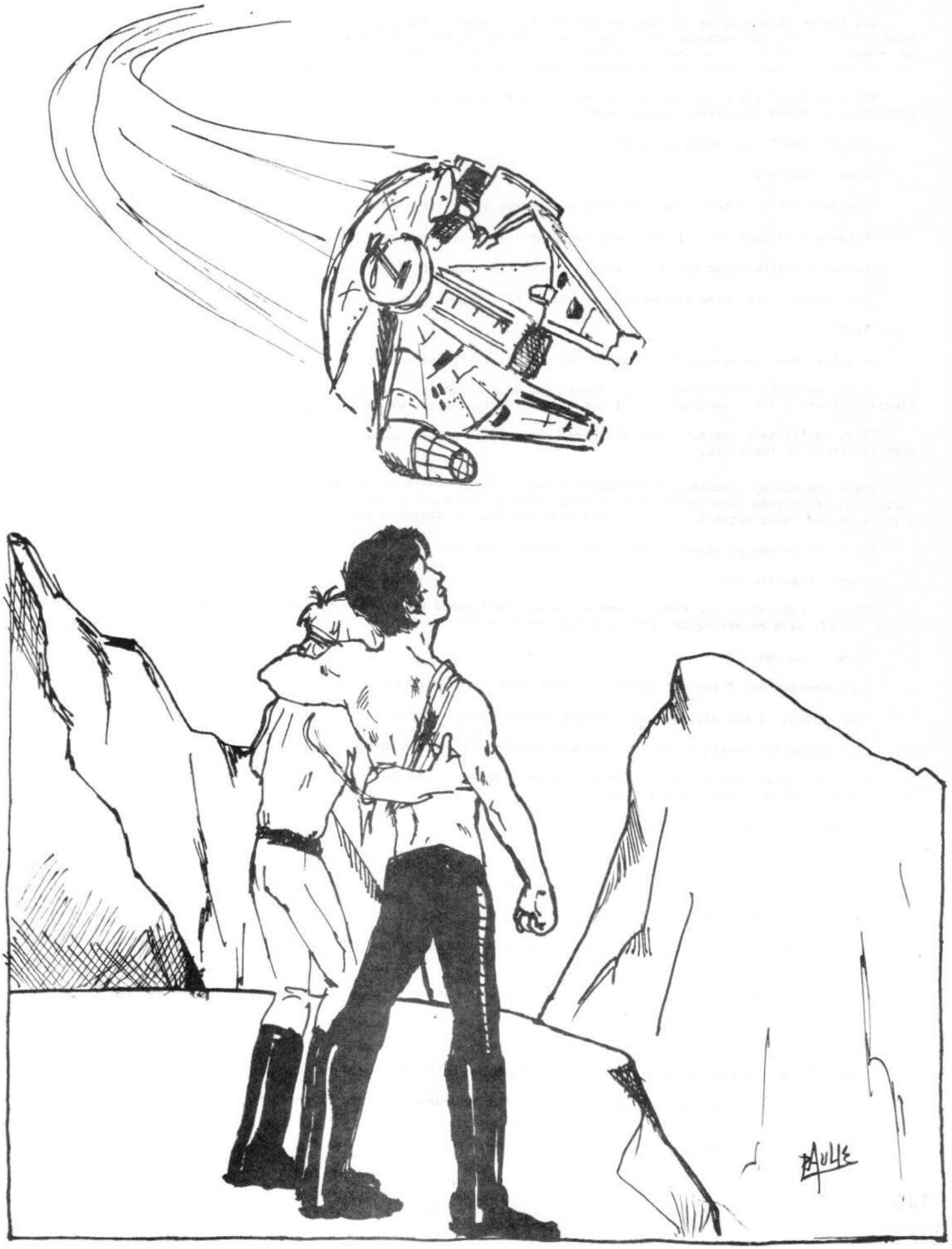
"Luke."

"It's okay, Han. Chewie's on the way."

The Corellian tried to get up, but could not. He lay still.

"All right, boy, we do this your way." The laser rifle came up, its deadly muzzle leveling on the sightless Jedi. Still, the youth made no move to defend himself. "One last time. Get away from him. Your death is pointless. You're worth nothing to me. He is. I won't leave without him. He's too damned hard to find."

The boy remained as before, only the blade of the strange weapon seemed to intensify at the hunter's words.



His finger tightened on the trigger and the rifle spoke. The beam, speeding toward the unprotected body of the youth, was suddenly met, engaged and parried by the blade of the energy weapon. The sightless boy moved with the grace, assurance and speed of the fully sighted. Twice more, the armored being fired and watched the blade of the strange weapon attract and deflect the bolts almost leisurely.

He lowered the rifle and the boy returned to his shoulder-width stance the saber before him, the blade reflecting from his sightless, ageless eyes.

"Who are you?" The being whispered.

"Luke Skywalker."

"The Jedi are no more!" The statement was spoken with little conviction.

"Perhaps - perhaps not. I think you had best leave while you can. You will not take him today."

The being stiffened at the boy's softly spoken statement of the obvious.

"Not today." The being agreed and shouldered his weapon. "The Wookiee is coming?"

"Yes."

Boba Fett made no attempt to question the youth's confident reply.

"Solo, he picks his friends well. Always his weaknesses prove to be his strengths. But, you will not always be there. I'm a patient man. I get what I contract for. We'll meet again."

"Yes. We'll meet again." Luke whispered the words. He was unaware when the being turned and disappeared over the crest of the ridge.

There was sadness, anxiety in Skywalker's face. For a moment he had seen a vision; of pain, of suffering, of friends tortured because of him. And, in the haze of his vision he saw an armored being - a being he had never actually seen. A cold wind touched his forehead and he shivvered.

"No." He whispered aloud. "Let no one suffer - not like that - ever - not - for me."

"Luke? Kid, are you - "

"Fine." Luke shook the vision from his mind. He reached out for the hand of his friend. The men's hands joined, each conveying the trust, caring and love for the other. "He's gone."

"Luke - can you - "

Luke wrenched his Force sensitive mind away from the disturbing vision and listened. "it's a ship."

"The Falcon. I was afraid I was hearing things - help me up - "

Luke pulled the Corellian to his feet and steadied him as the spacer gazed skyward.

Over the ridges behind them sailed the familiar shape of the Millennium Falcon. She rocked from port to starboard and back again in greeting.

"I wish you could see her.She's beautiful."

"I see her."

"Yeah - maybe you do. Those <u>senses</u> of yours are damned unsettling at times - "

"No, Han. I <u>see</u> her!"

Solo glanced quickly at the youth. Luke's eyes were open, bright, streaming tears, but focused and seeing.

There was a lump in the Corellian's throat he made no attempt to talk around; instead, thankful, hazel eyes met and held on pale-blue, knowing ones.

"Sometimes a man has to be blind - to see."

"Maybe." Solo whispered past his emotion. "And, maybe he has to be blind to make a <u>friend</u> see."

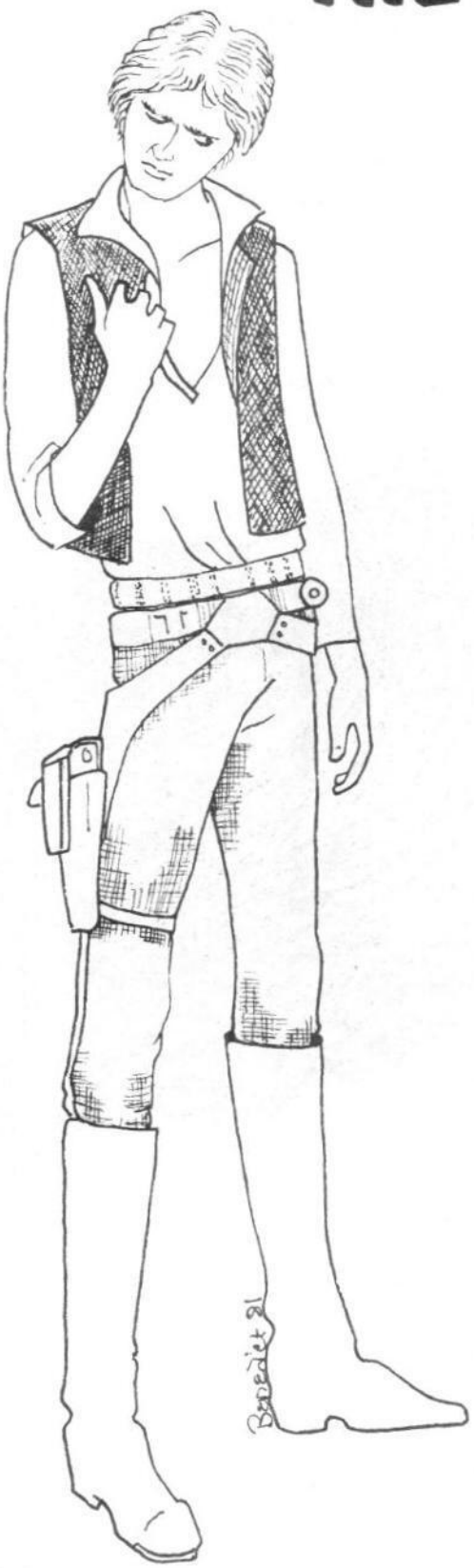
The familiar smile of the Corellian was greeted and returned in like by the youthful grin of the young Jedi.

"Let's go meet Chewie, and get off this sand bowl - I'm thirsty."

CODA

There are pains you bore when the way was hard
And you suffered silently
And you bought my life from the hand of Death
And you gave it back to me
Now my way is dark, but the Force is bright
By its Light I comprehend
The strength of will and the cosmic grace that it takes to save a friend
But I never saw inside your mind
Concealed from even you
The strong, free flow of the Force within
That fashions all you do.
Though my way is dark, yet the Force is bright
By its Light I comprehend
The strength of will and the cosmic grace That you've always had, my friend.
When your time ran down and your strength gave out
Still you never were alone
Though my eyes were blind, and yours as well,
The Light within us shone.
And the way was dark, yet the Force was bright
And we knew it at the end —
The strength of will and the cosmic grace That we saw in the eyes of a friend.

THE UPGIGIBFHS BLUES



Han Solo was a man,
An' you gotta understand
He was by far the most remarkable in space.
There was no one faster with a lase-gun or a blaster
And he had a simply devastating face!
The kind that made the ladies weep,
But Solo did not come too cheap!

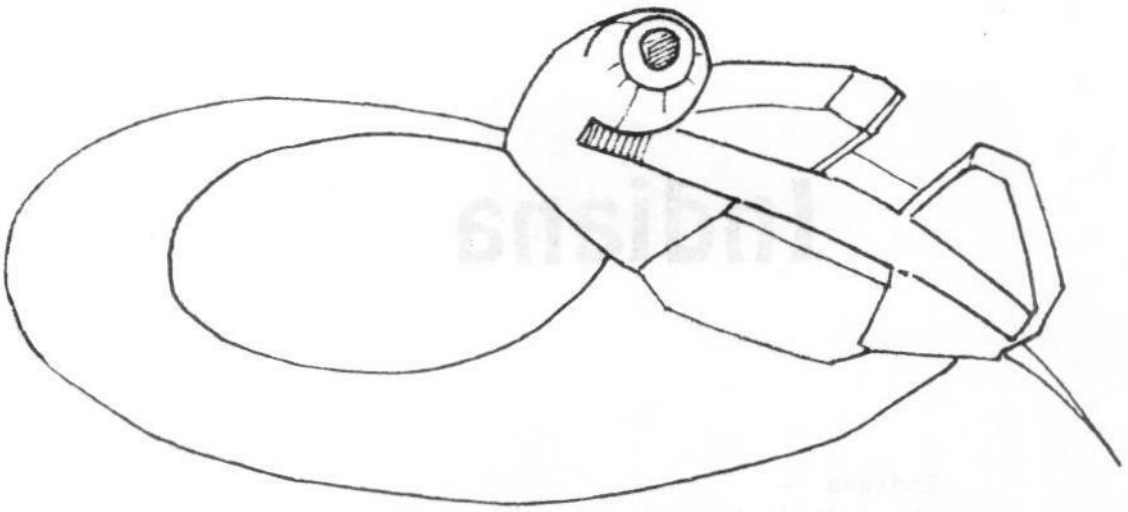
His specialty was smugglin' stuff
He didn't care if things got rough,
In fact, he kinda liked a laser-fight,
Which was a fairish indicator of a classy operator
And a guy who had the knack to play it light.
His custom blaster at his side
Was persuasion forcefully applied.

He ran the fastest starship
And it didn't pose no hardship
That the Falcon flew with heavy armament.
His runnin' buddy was a Wookie
And that dude he weren't no rookie.
He was a most impressive, most aggressive gent!
If either one got on your case,
I would not like to be in your place!

He was a woman chaser
An' a quintessential spacer,
But he saved his massive passion just for cash.
And he got that 'filthy lucre'
Any way that he could juke 'er
And he euchered it with quite a lot of flash.
Solo had the greatest style
From his space boots right up to his smile!

He's really somethin' special
Clear from Tatooine to Kessel
But to him I'm only tertiary news.
That's why I sing the Universal,
Pan Galactic, Intersteller
Got It Bad For Handsome Spacer Blues!

By Martie Benedict



Smiles

(Fourteen Credit Chrono)

Fourteen credit chrono that's already losing time
Looks so fancy wrapped around my wrist
That's all I have left of you to remember when you're gone
And these tears that touch the lips that you just kissed.

Smiles, you're all smiles
And you really turn me on.
You get me up and then you let me down.
You damn hotshot spacer gonna be the death of me,
But I love you every time you come around.

Man, you're so good looking, and you get the best of me
Tho I know you're only using me for fun.
I don't mind if I get used, I just wish you'd stick around
And pick up all the pieces when you're done!

Got a fourteen credit chrono, and I still got my guitar
But my heart is hanging out down in my shoes.
Music makes me crazy, and it sometimes helps the pain,
But there must be something else besides the blues!

Gonna get myself a bottle of the best Toovoolian
Gonna have a drink or six and think of you.
Maybe when I sober up, you'll be back again.
It ain't much, but it's all I have to do.

Smiles, you're all smiles
And you really turn me on!
You get me up and then you let me down.
You damn hotshot spacer gonna be the death of me,
But I love you every time you come around.

Indiana

Indiana --
Oh, I don't know why the things that you do
Do the things that they do to me.
I only know when I'm in your arms
You really set me free.
You're everything that a woman wants
And more on top of that.
And I love you from your scuffed-up boots
To the top of your scruffy hat.

Indiana --
I never was into kinky stuff
Till I saw you with your whip.
Now every time I think of it
My composure starts to slip.
You ain't a flashy dresser
And you always need a shave.
But, honey, you got what it takes
To make this girl behave.

Indiana --
You've got a passion for the past,
I can see it in your face.
But I'd like you so much better
In a passionate embrace.
So I hope you hear when I call you
In my very best dulcet tones,
'Cause I love your bedside manner,
Doctor Indiana Jones!

Martie Benedict

J R Dunster '81

CONVERSATION WITH KENNY

He smiled -- that smile so oddly Ken --
Fingered the gun across his knees,
Then looked at me, said, "Honey, please ... "
Sighing, "I ain't like other men."
He spoke so softly that I leaned
Still closer. I believed it, sure.
I knew it, yeah, everything you're
Tellin' me. Oh, the dreams I dreamed!
'Cause I was raised on love and God,
Do unto others, all that stuff.
The Army says real men are tough.
This gun now -- that's my staff, my rod."
He stopped, then spoke against my tears,
"You see, they taught me how to hate.
You come, sweetheart, a little late
To help... " The silence spoke his fears.
"I lost it all, back there
Forgot, I guess, just how to care.
Oh, honey, I know, it ain't fair.
It's just -- well, it's the way I am."
He whispered, "Go back to the car."
And as I left I heard his gun.
I knew it was too late to run --
I knew he'd shot his final star.

Marcia Wickes

Happily Ever After

Dannell Lites

illustrated by Gordon Carleton

... So the beautiful Princess and her brave, handsome cavalier lived happily ever after ...

-- Mother Goose

"Life here on New Alderaan," the Chief Councillor boasted to his newly appointed associate, "is remarkably tranquil. Queen Leia Organa, for all her youth, is a wise ruler who allows the state to more or less run itself. Your job will be a simple one, really. On matters of protocol and decorum, you will be at her Majesty's disposal. Reared as she was, surrounded by the Alderaani and Imperial courts, you will find she has little need of your services." The older, gray-bearded man smiled beneficently at his starry-eyed colleague. "So," he concluded, "you, my friend, have lucked into every diplomat's dream: a prestigious post that doesn't require your attention often." For a long moment the statesman seemed lost in the past, his nervous hands stroking the cuffs of his sedate crimson robes.

"Oh, but it was different in the old days. My space, yes! In those times, one never knew where one's services would be needed next: cementing a new treaty for the Alliance, outwitting the Empire in coup after diplomatic coup -- ah, but that was excitement to be remembered! It did make the blood run swiftly, I can tell you." With an effort he appeared to rouse from his reverie. "Difficult to believe it was all only ten years ago." The Councillor sighed in fond farewell to happier days. "Still," he was careful to add in prim, dutiful tones, "Her Majesty and her fellow Senators are, of course, to be commended for the splendid way the new Republic governs its vast territories. We live in golden days, my boy, golden days."

"Of course," the slightly rotund, younger man murmurred, a suggestive twinkle dancing in his green eyes like a wicked imp. "And General Skywalker's New Order of Jedi Knights is a great help, I'm sure. I've long looked forward to meeting the General. I understand he's an old friend of the Queen's."

"Indeed! General Skywalker is a frequent visitor here at the palace. You shall, almost without doubt, be meeting him soon. You'll meet many famous, fascinating people during the course of your duties," he rhapsodized, "all the rulers and intelligentsia of our new Republic. These halls have seen them all." Then his ruddy face seemed to pass beneath a storm cloud, threatening a spring storm. "There's only one drawback to your position," he began -- by way of warning, it must be fairly said. Personally, he hated this part of orientation porcedure: he always felt like such a fool. Really, how did one explain something like that? It was quite beyond ....

"I can't imagine what it could be," the other man was bold enough to interrupt, laughing. "You've made the job sound well-nigh perfect!" *Perhaps too perfect,* came his sudden, discomforting thought.

The Chief Councillor's sickly, wan smile did little to reassure him -- quite the opposite, in fact. "Not what. *Who*. It seems obvious, but -- you haven't met the Consort yet, have you?"

Mystified by this turn of the conversation and his fellow's blatant distaste, the other shook his balding head, frowning. "Well, no I haven't, now that you mention it. I don't seem to recall -- I mean -- I -- does Queen Leia have a Consort?"

The taller, harassed bureaucrat was bitter. "After a fashion. He's not act -- "

"I don't care *who* you are!" a loud caustic voice shouted, echoing through the corridors just then, seeming to drive all others before it like chaff before a strong wind. "You keep those," and his lips curled sneeringly around the no longer innocent word, twisting it into strange shapes there in the harsh light, " -- *mechanics* away from my ship! It's gonna take me weeks to retune the engines now!"

"But, sir ... !"

Like a contained explosion the two men burst from the shrouded hallway, the tall dark-haired Corellian dressed with a spacer's casual arrogance glaring down at the frightened transport technician in lubrication-stained coveralls of bright blue Organa household livery.

"But -- but, sir -- " the tech protested again, plaintively.

GORDON
CARLETON

"Pardon me," the elder diplomat excused himself moving off in the direction of the quarreling duo. Had the Chief Councillor really blanched, his white lipped mouth falling into familiar grim lines? Surely not! and yet ... In bulging eyed horror he watched the grateful technician scurry out of harm's way as the Councillor's approach distracted his belligerent opponant. Wearily, the statesman smiled for all he was worth, resignation stamped on his every action. "If I might speak with you for a moment, Captain Solo .... ? About tomorrow night .... "

After a few minutes of whispered conversation the Corellian, whose choler was increasing with every word, declared, "I'm not going to any state dinner!"

Momentarily the heated argument threatened to escalate beyond the bounds of the small anteroom into the vast avenues of the palace itself. Mesmerized by his sweating colleague's travail, the novice protocol officer began to nurture a hideous suspicion. Could *this* be ... Oh, pray Force not! He shuddered at his companion's plight, dealing with such an obstructive, crude man. What to do? He felt foolish just standing there, but how could he --

Tinkling laughter invaded the volatile chamber, seeping in from a distant corner. They all turned almost as one, to see Leia Organa, Queen of New Alderaan and guiding light of the Republican Senate glide across the slick marbelite floor, coming to dock with a smile and regarding them out of glittering brown eyes.

"Bickering with my Councillors again, Han?" she teased. He grinned down at her as she kissed him on the cheek.

"Your Majesty," the Chief Councillor acknowledged, uneasy at her presence. Not, he had to admit, that it was a novel experience. He had long since ceased to be bothered by discovery in his often marathon battles with the obstinate Solo.

"Leave him to me, Councillor," she whispered conspiratorially, ushering him to a safe distance from the fulminating Corellian. "You just have to know how to handle him." The diplomat glanced at her skeptically, then favored his fellow with such a look of helplessness that the budding bureaucrat was pierced to the heart. Leia Organa's hushed conversation with her recalcitrant lover was liberally sprinkled with dazzling smiles and subdued merriment, as though she hoped to humor him from his ill temper. The Chief Councillor sniffed audibly, wishing her luck, but harboring no great faith in the oft-used tactic. He knew what was coming.

"No!" the Corellian's firm reply rang out among the warm tapestries and carefully artful statuary.

The Queen's smile wavered but gallantly refused to vanish altogether. The stubborn Corellian only looked more determined, shaking his head.

"Han ... !" Queen Leia's tone was sharp now, her smile a thing of the distant past.

"I told you! I am not going to any state dinner!" Solo was mulish.

The protocol officer watched with mounting amazement as their voice rose, their gestures growing more emphatic and less inhibited. Great Force! Was he truly witnessing the royal couple squabbling like school children? In *public!* And such language!

"Damn you, Han Solo! I hope you like your cabin aboard that junkheap you call a ship! Because that's where you're spending the night!"

"Fine with me, sister!" he jeered, stomping off. A loud, cocky, "But don't bet on it!" reverberated back behind him as he disappeared around a corner.

"Oh, that arrogant, banth-brained ... !" And her voice faded as she, too, stalked off, though in the opposite direction, leaving the two stunned Councillors gaping in her furious wake. Grave silence hovered over them for long moments before it was sundered.

"Are they always like that?"

"Always," was the Chief Councillor's bleak reply to his horrified fellow.

"For the last ten year?" the other managed in a shocked voice, appalled by the very idea. At his Chief's nod of silent, monstrous affirmation, the younger official was speechless.

"Don't misunderstand, though, my boy," his superior felt impelled to to caution him, but without much enthusiasm, it was true. "Before dinner they'll be back together, smiling and walking arm in arm. They may quarrel viciously, but it's never for long. Unfortunately, neither of them can every stay away for very long, either. Captain Solo left for almost a year once. You can't imagine our relief; we seriously considered holding midnight revels in the Grand Ballroom. But he came back. Just breezed back into her Majesty's bed as though he had never left it." He sighed. "It wouldn't be quite so intolerable if the situation weren't so ... awkward."

The smaller man found his voice. "Awkward?"

The Chief shot him a strange look. Terribly, I'm afraid. You see, Captain Solo -- how shall I phrase this tactfully? -- has no legal status here at Court. Thos of us in the Queen's service find it politic to refer to him as the Consort, but he isn't, really."

The stout neophyte diplomat was increduous. "You mean they aren't .... ?"

"No, they aren't, and never likely to be, either. It's hideously difficult. I mean, how does one explain what amounts to a male concubine? Not that we haven't tried, mind you! If we only could get rid of him! We've begged, pleaded, threatened and cajoled, all to no avail. Useless, utterly useless. We've thrown the handsomest, most eligible men in the Republic at her, every one of them emminently suitable. She ignored them all. In desperation, we even approached General Skywalker." He winced at the memory.

"But!" he was fierce in defense of his Queen, "whatever her faults, Her Majesty has done more for galactic peace and unity than anyone else of her generation! She deserves whatever solace she can find."

"Oh, I quite agree, sir," his companion assured him. "Believe me, I'll do anything I can to make your job of dealing with Captain Solo as apinless as possible.

The Chief Councillor frowned. "I'm afraid you don't understand, after all," he explained mildly, resolutely beating down a generous portion of undiplomatic glee. "*You're* the Protocol Minister. Dealing with Captain Solo is your job now. He's *your* responsibility."

This time it wasn't the Chief Councillor who blanched and gasped aloud.

Ophiophobia

Jacqueline Taero

Why did it have to be reptiles?
Why not quicksand or underground lakes?
Why not spiders or bees or wild horses?
WHY did it have to be *snakes?*

STAND
IN !!!

FACETS

1 - #4 are permanently out of print. However, if you wish to obtain xeroxes of these issues, send a self addressed stamped enveloped to Lori Chapek-Carleton, 5132 Jo-Don Drive, E. Lansing, Mich. 48823 for her price list. She has xeroxing right to these issues, and any future ishes of ours that go out of print. Also, ask her for her complete price list -- might find something there you like!

#5 -- our holiday issue, dedicated to every holiday in the book, is still in print. Contents include: "Tidings of Comfort and Joy" by Denise Sheets (a little boy and a teddy bear work a small miracle for Officer Bob Falfa); "Home for Christmas" by Sherry Magee (Ken Boyd's uneasy Yule with the family he never really came home to); "The Way Home" by Sheila Paulson (it's Life Day, Han and Chewie are in jail, but Han has a way out -- for Chewie); "Festival In Paradise" by J.A. Berger (a life renewal festival on an exotic planet turns out to be a bit more than Han, Luke and Leia bargained for); "A Day in the Life of Han Solo" by Eva Albertsson (a combination Life Day and Halloween story); plus poetry by Sheila Paulson, Sherry Magee and Meg Garrett and art by Martynn, Paulie, Gordon Carleton, Dianne Wickes, Joni Wagner and Larry Blake. Price: $5.90 first class $4.50 in person. SASE us for UPS rate.

#6 -- also still in print. Contents include: "An Honest Job" by Elyse Dickenson (going straight can be hazardous to your health); "Intergalactic Colloquy" by Eva Albertsson (What sort of conversation might Han and Harrison have?); "Second Time Around" by Chris Jeffords (Han and Lando, round one); "Changes" by Sherry Magee (the prequel to "Home for Christmas" in #5); "Occupational Hazard" by Eva M.E. Oslo (the events leading up to the fateful meeting in the cantina); "Home is the Hunter" by Kelly Hill (Avram's been shot and Tommy's out for revenge); "A Bad Case of Corellian" by J.A. Berger (Han and Leia are captured by primitives who think Han is in rut!); plus poetry by Susan Matthews, Tammy and Lynn Monfette, Chris Cohea, Tynn Terry, Karen Trimble, Karen Zygowicz, Sheila Paulson and Kelly Hill, and art by Martynn, Paulie, Bec Aulenbach, Larry Blake, Pam Kowalski, Dianne Wickes, Wanda Lybarger, Stephanie Hawks, Cathy Strand, and Daphne Hamilton. Price: $7.90 first class, $6 in person. SASE for UPS prices.

IN THE FUTURE ...

#9/10 -- another double ish, folks! Contents to include: "Gunhand of Fate" part one, by J.A. Berger (an Army payroll is stolen, two men are shot and the evidence points to Tommy Lillard); "Gratia Artis" by Eva Albertsson (Indy's accidental entrance into an alternate universe, with a hair-raising guide); "Twink" by Martie Benedict (the sequel to "Ganna II Affair" in #7/8); "Just Like Starting Over" by Lindsey Nuttal (after 13 happy years of marriage, Han gets cabin fever); "The Writing on the Wall" by Roberta Rogow (and you thought only the walls of Jericho could come tumbling down); The Ultimate Fan-tasy" by Eva Albertsson (a fannish dream come true -- or is it?)"Beginnings" by Roberta Stuemke (another side of the rumored courtmartial of Han Solo); "Raiders of the Lost Orc" by Martie Benedict (yes, you read that right -- Indiana Jones meets the Lord of the Rings); "Corellian Thoughts" by Yvonne Harrison (a hungover Han contemplates his fate); plus poetry by Marcia Wickes, Tia Nichols, Jane Firmstone-Rafferty, Jacqueline Taero, Karen Ann Weikert, Martie Benedict, Karen Zygowicz and Gracia Fay Elwood, and art by Martynn, Paulie, Larry Blake, Gordon Carleton, Wanda Lybarger, Dot Sasscer, Bec Aulenbach,Karen River, J.M. Dunster, Cherie Abell, and many more. SASE for price after May 15, 1982. Tentative due date: May 15, 1982

#11 -- now collecting submissions for this ish, which, considering the trend so far, might just be another double! With front cover "Indy's Dream" by Martynn, contents to include "Gunhand of Fate" part two by J.A. Berger; " Cerullean Dawn" by Martie Benedict (Han and company's search for a legendary 'ghost ship'); "Treasure Hunt" by Sheila Paulson (Han and Lando taking on more than they bargained for in a get-rich-quick scheme); "Relative Situations" by Martie Benedict (Han's old flame, her brother, a fast gunman, and a down ship all feature prominently in this action-adventure story); "Go Down, Moses" by Roberta Rogow (it's Rosh Hashana, and temporary tycoon Tommy Lillard has to help hide a fugitive slave); plus poetry by Martie Benedict, Tia Nichols, Michele Quesnel, Madge Longhurst, Cathie Whitehead, Martynn, Judith Balcombe and others, and art by Martynn, Paulie, Dot Sasscer, Bec Aulenbach, Wanda Lybarger, Larry Blake, Karen River, Barbara Fister-Liltz, Gordon Carleton, and others. Tentative due date: September 15, 1982.

As always, with all submissions please send a s.a.s.e with sufficient postage to return it to you should it be necessary (we will mark down credit or return your sase if we accept your piece). All written submssions must be legibly typewritten, and art is preferred to be black and white ink, though we will screen a truly fine piece of art done in another medium. If required, send a business size sase for our list of writer's guidelines (they're basic common sense, but they're here if you feel you need them). Address all submission and any other inquiries to:

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